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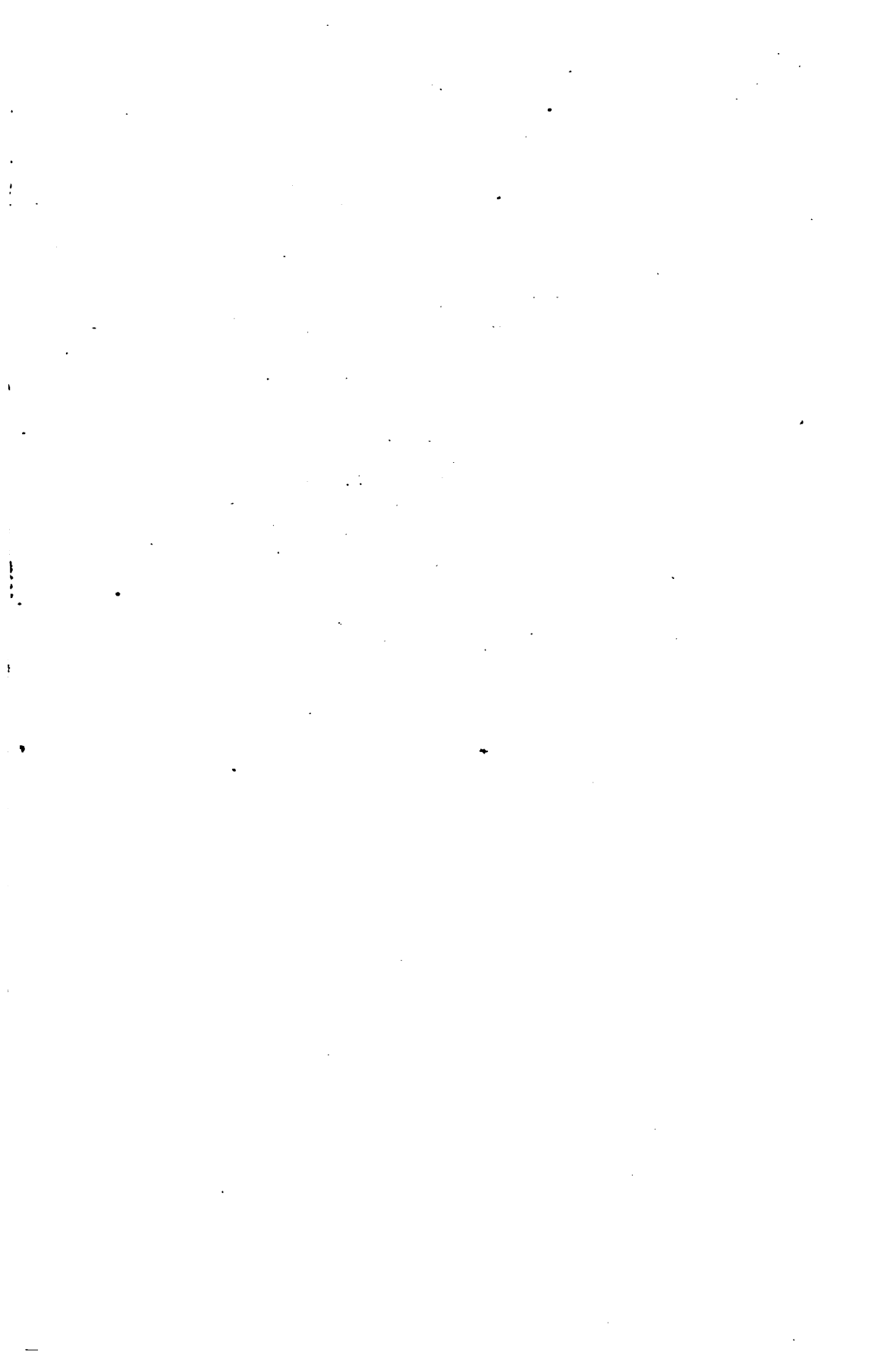
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ALSO

THE EXTRA CHRISTMAS NUMBER FOR 1892,

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TAKEN ON TRUST,

By MARY ANGELA DICKENS,

Author of "Cross Currents," etc., etc.,

And MARGARET MOULE,

Author of "The Thirteenth Brydain," etc., etc.,

WILL BE FOUND AT THE END OF THE VOLUME.

Third
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8THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM
YEAR TO YEAR.

AUG 9 1892

All the Year Round

CONDUCTED BY

CHARLES DICKENS.

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ALL THE YEAR ROUND

A Weekly Journal

CONDUCTED BY

CHARLES DICKENS.

No. 183.—THIRD SERIES.

SATURDAY, JULY 2, 1892.

PRICE TWOPENCE.

MISS LATIMER OF BRYANS.

BY ELEANOR C. PRICE.

Author of "Alexia," "Red Towers," "The Little One," etc.

CHAPTER IV. A SEPTEMBER MOON.

GEOFFREY lived in the chalet which was a "dépendance" of the "Blumenhof." The two casement windows of his low, quaint room looked out into the vine which covered the walls, and then into an odd little garden with trim hedges and a fountain, from which a flight of steps led up to the tree-shaded terrace, with iron tables and chairs set along it, in front of the hotel. Below this garden, through a green arch, one went down into a larger garden with lawns and fruit trees and long flower-borders by straight gravel walks, now gorgeous with dahlias and here and there a rose-bush. One broad path led straight downhill to the road that ran between town and lake, and made a short cut for walkers. The driving road, winding and narrow, twisted about for a much more serious distance between the hotel and the town. Up and down this road the omnibus rattled, and groaning loads of luggage were dragged and pushed from the landing-place of the steamers. The road ran in a hollow just below the wall of Geoffrey's chalet, which overhung it on the other side from the garden. Then away to the south, beyond the gardens, the hotel had a large and picturesque orchard, through which more paths wandered, where the grass grew long and wild, and the trees were loaded with red and purple and yellow fruit. Altogether, the "Blumenhof" and its surroundings, though simple and rustic and familiar compared with the

"Grand Hotel" by the lake, was a pleasant place in warm and sunny weather. Herzheim lies low on the whole, and cannot boast of much fresh air. The "Blumenhof," standing as high as it could on the hillside, with its yellow face to the west, caught any breeze that might blow across from the mountains, and escaped in great measure the damps rising from the lake. Wet days were not pleasant there, it is true. When all the trees and grass were soaking and dropping, and waterfalls could be heard on the hill above, and the bubble of the fountain added to the general sensation of water and noise, and the town could only be reached by wading down the lane through running brooks, the "Blumenhof" became too remote to be endured. Two days of rain was often enough to empty it.

But Geoffrey Thorne had been fortunate in sunshine and dry weather, and once more, looking out through his vine-leaves into the deep lights of sunset, he blessed very heartily the golden evenings of Herzheim. He wondered how he came to be such a lucky fellow. That fit of depression by the river had passed away. He had reached a calmer frame of mind. He had been thinking a good deal of the red-haired stranger. Now there was a fellow—an ugly fellow, too—who looked as if there was nothing in the world he could not have if he chose.

"Am I not as good as he?" thought Geoffrey.

He looked uncommonly sharp; but after all, there are finer things than sharpness. Finer things than being able to paint, too—manliness, a mind made up, a strong will. All sorts of wise men have observed that a man can have what he wants in this world, if only he wants it strongly enough.

The most poetical and the most prosaic minds agree there. One tells you that will and character are everything; another, that mountains and deep seas are obstacles not worth mentioning. So Geoffrey, strengthened by these meditations, which showed so plainly that the voice of the ages was on his side and that the world was a ball at his feet, brushed his hair and looked out at the sunset in such renewed spirits that he actually whistled.

Then the dinner-bell of the "Blumenhof" began to clang, and he presently went down the wide oak staircase of the old building, and along the brick-paved passage, and out by the garden door, stopping to pick a scrap of mignonne, and up the steps to the terrace, where a few people were strolling about, and the glass doors of the lighted dining-room stood wide open.

Geoffrey did not see his friends; but in another moment he heard Poppy's voice, and then her golden head appeared at the south corner of the terrace. She and her aunt had walked down a little way towards the orchard, in the warm evening air. Now they were coming back; and if Geoffrey went forward now, he would meet them close to the dining-room door. He did not go forward, however. In spite of all his new courage a cold shiver ran over him, and he stood still in the shadow of a plane-tree. Poppy and her aunt were not alone, the red-haired stranger was walking with them, and all three were laughing and talking together in easy intimacy.

They passed on into the dining-room. Geoffrey stood a few moments outside, hesitating. All his courage had departed; he feared the stranger as much as he hated him. Of course the man was in love with Poppy. How could any man come near her without being in love with her? And he had every advantage. Ugly of course; but how clever, and how abominably sure of himself! Just the sort of man to do what he liked with women. It was too hard, really!

Geoffrey, though quite aware that he had had no dinner and not much luncheon, was on the point of going off for a walk, finding it impossible to face that man, when an old German waiter, a friend of his, looking out for stragglers before shutting the glass doors, saw him a few yards off, and opened them wider with a bow and a smile. It seemed almost impossible to walk off then without making a fool of himself, so Geoffrey slipped into the dining-

room, pale and frowning, sat down in his place, which was luckily far from Poppy and her friends, and without looking up began to eat his soup, which nearly choked him.

He disappeared before dinner was over. The sunset lights were gone, even the after-glow was gone from the mountains; but an enormous yellow moon, rising slowly in the south-east, was beginning to bathe the old towers of Herzheim in a new kind of glory. An ocean of deep blue shadow lay over the hollow of gardens, meadows, and lanes, and narrow streets between the "Blumenhof" and the Castle rock, which, with its platforms and turrets and church spire with the fantastic irregular roof and chimneys that crowded against it, was like a great group of strange mediæval sculpture, carved by giants in shining marble.

"That might be magic, but it's real," thought Geoffrey as he went down into the shadow. "Like life—a fancy picture—more beautiful than reality. One couldn't paint that. One can only paint reality—and that just shows. I wonder how old I shall be before I give up building castles! I wonder who that fellow is!"

A few minutes' walk brought him to the foot of that magic hill. Some of its wonder was gone when he had climbed the steps from the town, had crossed the shadows of the churchyard, and was standing in that corner turret where Poppy had stood a few hours before. The arches, as he looked up at them, were black now, instead of white; the long tendrils of creeper, black and pale gold, were repeated in strange and beautiful tracery on the floor. The stillness of night lay on Herzheim; hardly a murmur came up from the narrow streets. Far away on the lake oars were gently splashing, and there was a distant sound of voices and laughter. Some visitors from the "Grand Hotel," probably, had taken a boat and gone out in the moonlight. How could all these people sleep, indeed, in a world lighted by the great gold lamp yonder! It was almost an Italian moon; a warmth seemed to fall with its rich yellow flood of light.

Geoffrey sat down on the stone ledge of the turret, smoked his cigarette, and looked. Nature is sometimes responsible for wild aspirations which would never be made if she remained grey, uninteresting, protected by the veil of clouds without which her human part would oftener lose the reasonable balance of its mind. One cannot make out that all

the discoveries of science affect in the least the impressions made by beauty. That is as magical as ever, and perhaps will never be explained. Moonlight as it is in the South, autumn colour, certain kinds of music, a lovely face—it may be better for the quiet work and reason of the world that these are not seen and heard every day.

Even the distant mountain peaks began to shine now as the moon rose higher, and far away on the lake those voices began to sing. It lay rippling like a sea of light. The trees stood against it in dark masses, motionless; the deep shadows of the town lay still. It seemed to Geoffrey that the night grew warmer, that the air, though not a breath was stirring, thrilled and trembled as it might at noonday, in the golden glory of that moon. A suggestion came to him, and at first he shrugged his shoulders and refused to listen. It said that Poppy might like to go out in a boat on the lake to-night, too. Why not? It was not late; it was very warm; the distance to the lake was short; and there were plenty of boats to be had at the "Grand Hotel."

He longed to be rowing Poppy out across that shining sea. Of course there must be other people—one must bear that—the world, unfortunately, was made so; but yet—Then the question was: dared he go back to the hotel and ask her in the face of her aunt and the stranger? He started up, left his dear turret, and paced up and down several times on the straight path by the churchyard wall. The thing did not improve with thinking about it. At last Geoffrey, calling himself a few hard names, dashed out of the churchyard and bolted down the steps into the town at the pace of a runaway thief, so that good Herzheimers just going to sleep opened their eyes with angry remarks, and dogs began to bark excitedly.

Geoffrey's hesitations, in fact, had wasted a good deal of time. As he ran down the steps the chimes began to play behind him, and slowly and musically the old church clock clanged out nine. No time must be lost, indeed, if his idea was likely to please Poppy. He ran through the quiet lanes, ran up through the shadowy garden, and stopped short at the arch which led into the small upper garden with the fountain. For there she stood by the little pool alone: a white shawl muffled round her shoulders, her fair head bent as

she watched the water playing and flashing, and the small dark forms of fish darting round. Geoffrey would have been angry if any one had said that the moonlight made her more beautiful. But it did. It added a touch of delicacy, of imagination, of that kind of mysterious attractiveness which does not belong quite naturally to an honest, simple, single-hearted Englishwoman. It is, perhaps, a little foreign. At any rate, it belongs generally to women who have seen much of life and of the world, and whose hearts and minds are far from simple, and a little wearied. Poppy had naturally nothing of it at this time, except in the tone of her voice. That had always been rather unaccountable. But Geoffrey, coming slowly through the archway with his eyes fixed upon her, gave no credit at all to the magic of the moon. He only felt that she was wonderful; that he had never dreamed of such beauty; that it ought to be enough for a man to kneel down and worship, without ever asking for anything more. He forgot all about prejudiced aunts and intruding strangers, and felt happy in knowing that of all the people in the world, only one mattered to him, and that that one was Poppy Latimer.

He did not even want to tell her so. Eager and passionate as his nature was, he felt just then that his love could be unselfish. Poppy took her power over him, even that first day, with strange completeness, partly, of course, because of her perfect unconsciousness; and this again sprang from causes of which poor Geoffrey would not have cared to be reminded. But she made her slave very happy; much happier than was wise, for generous and thoughtless people make mistakes sometimes.

She turned to him with a kind smile of welcome, as he walked quietly up to her, and said:

"What has become of you all this time, Mr. Thorne? You don't paint by moonlight, do you?"

"No," said Geoffrey. "I've never tried that. I went off to the Castle to look at the heavenly view, and then came back thinking—perhaps—you would care to go out on the lake. There are one or two boats out now. I could hear the people singing. Altogether, it was quite Italian; so hot, too. You wouldn't be cold on the water?"

He spoke in a low and rather hurried voice. It seemed almost foolish now to propose boating, when they were together,

actually alone together in that little quiet garden—commanded, it was true, by all the windows of chalet and hotel. He felt almost disappointed when she said instantly :

"That would be perfectly charming. I felt as if the evening was being wasted. Cold ! Oh, no ; and I can fetch more wraps. Come and ask Aunt Fanny."

For a moment flashed through Geoffrey's mind a thought of the wildest ignorance : "Will she go with me alone ?" But he knew better the next instant, and was resigned.

As they turned towards the terrace, she said :

"We wondered what had become of you. I saw you at dinner, a long way off, and afterwards I looked about for you. I wanted to introduce you to our friend Mr. Otto Nugent, who came this afternoon. He is clever about art, and many other things too. I think you would like him. Aunt Fanny and I were telling him about your sketches."

"Thank you," murmured Geoffrey. "You said this afternoon that you expected some friends."

"Yes ; he is the first instalment. His wife and his mother and his brother are all coming. They will be here to-morrow, I dare say. He is making a walking tour, and joins them now and then."

"He walked in to-day, didn't he, from the direction of Berne ?"

Poppy turned her head with the slightest look of surprise.

"You met him ?"

"After your visit," Geoffrey explained, "I couldn't settle down again to work, you know, so I went off for a walk by the river. Yes, I met your friend—or rather he passed me. He asked me to direct him here. He asked if any one of the name of Nugent had arrived yet. He didn't ask about you, or I should have been wiser. When I saw him go in to dinner with you, I wondered who he was."

Poppy looked up, with a little mischief in her smile.

"He frightened you away !" she said.

She lingered, her hand lying on the stone balustrade of the steps. Geoffrey almost stooped to kiss the loveliest thing, as he thought, that the moon had yet shone upon. But he wisely controlled himself, and said, with a slight happy laugh :

"Yes, he frightened me away. How awfully clever you are !"

And what an ass he had been to run away from Mr. Nugent—an old married man ! But Miss Latimer, with all her cleverness, did not know the reason. She thought him more shy than he was, and less foolish. Well, it did not matter ; he was happy.

Miss Fanny Latimer and Mr. Nugent were sitting in a square of moonlight at the other end of the terrace. He got up when the two figures approached, coming out of the shadow of the plane-trees. His manner to Geoffrey was frank and pleasant, though with still a touch of the satirical, and a keenness of glance, which made Geoffrey feel that he should never like him cordially.

"Here you are in high feather," he seemed to say ; "but who was moping with his head in his hands by the river down there ? What are you hatching in that foolish brain of yours, young man ?"

His spoken words, however, were of civil thanks for being so well directed.

"And I almost asked you," he said, "if Miss Latimer was here, as well as about my own people. But I thought you were a total stranger, and it was better not."

"As it was, you see," said Poppy, "you couldn't have asked any one more likely to know. Instead of being a total stranger, Mr. Thorne is a very old friend—older than you, in fact."

Mr. Nugent made her a bow, and her aunt laughed. Geoffrey looked at her silently, and dropped his eyes almost in terror when she turned to him.

"And now about the lake," she said. "Aunt Fanny, Mr. Thorne wants us all to go out in a boat. There are people out there now, singing. What do you say ? It is so hot and lovely ; you couldn't catch cold."

"A boat, dear Poppy ! At this time of night !"

There was such consternation in Aunt Fanny's voice that Geoffrey almost laughed.

"Tell her about it," Poppy commanded. "Aunt Fanny, it is exactly the right time."

Geoffrey made some attempt at describing the sea of silver, the moonlit mountains, the short distance, the ease with which a boat could be hired at the "Grand Hotel." But he felt that his audience was unsympathetic, and his eloquence failed a little. It was especially

chilled by the prudent and elderly air with which Mr. Nugent took out his watch.

"Dear me! What do you think, Otto?" said Aunt Fanny.

"I think it would have been very nice directly after dinner, nearly two hours ago. It is now getting on for half-past nine. Weary pedestrians like myself begin to think of bed, rather than a boat. I don't wish to disappoint anybody, and I'm not altogether selfish, but really I think the damp from the lake, at this time of night, and after one has passed the age of twenty——"

"There is more damp soon after sunset," said Geoffrey.

"Not on the lake itself, I fancy, is there? Anyhow, let me propose putting off till to-morrow. Will that do? Besides, the others may be here. We can have a bigger boat, and all go together. If you want singing, Alice will sing for you."

"That will be much, much nicer," said Miss Latimer earnestly. "And if your mother and I like to stay at home, Alice and Poppy will have each other."

"Perhaps it will rain," said Poppy.

"No, it won't rain. This weather means to last," said Mr. Nugent, looking at her with a smile of quiet triumph, as he put back his watch.

Poppy hesitated a moment. It was evident that she was disappointed, and a little displeased with her companions. Her aunt looked at her anxiously; with all her faith in Poppy's sweetness, she was not quite sure how she would bear a positive decision from Otto Nugent. The Nugents were her own friends, and Poppy's entire acceptance of them was a matter about which she felt both doubtful and seriously concerned. Anyhow, Poppy was a person very much accustomed to have her own way. As a rule, where she wished to go, she went. She was never selfish or ill-natured. But Miss Latimer knew that if she wished to avoid or gain anything, in her life with Poppy, a little discreet management was not out of place. A slight headache, cold, lameness, disinclination even, would always gain the day; but it was never advisable to treat Poppy's plans with disrespect. Otto must be warned of this, Miss Latimer thought uneasily. No man who laid down the law to Poppy, in a slightly priggish and patronising fashion, would ever have any influence with her.

If Miss Latimer wished for any serious

talk with her friend, the opportunity was at once given her. Poppy turned to Geoffrey Thorne, and said, in her most gracious manner:

"Would you like a little walk in the orchard?"

They walked away together, and were soon lost among the shadows. The paths went winding about among large, dark old fruit-trees, round whose feet the grass grew fine and long. The orchard sloped gradually away to the south-west, and the moon, shining over a belt of fir-trees, bathed its lower half in light; the upper slopes lay more in the shadow of woods and hills. They strolled down towards the town and lake, till they came to an open space of broad moonshine; here the path grew broader: there was a bench, and Poppy sat down. Geoffrey stood opposite to her, looked at her, and looked round him. They were utterly alone; even the hotel's high windows were hidden by rising ground; and the Castle rock was shut out by the near trees. They had been talking ordinary Swiss talk, chiefly of lakes and boating, and Poppy had seemed a little preoccupied. Now, while Geoffrey, as he watched her, thought of the Garden of Paradise and what it must have been to walk there, she looked up and said suddenly:

"I want to ask some curious questions, Mr. Thorne. Will you forgive me?"

A HOLIDAY IN DORSET.

SWANAGE, CORFE, AND WAREHAM.

THE sun is bright, the sea is calm, and away we go, the paddle-wheels of the "Lord Elgin" churning the water into foam, and racing the opposition boat for the Bay of Swanage, the headlands of which can just be made out through the thin sea haze. Harp and viol tune up as we are well out in the blue sea, and their strains are mingled with the more martial echoes from a German band on board our rival. Youth is at the prow, actually in the shape of a nice boy of our acquaintance, who is seated on the bowsprit heel; middle-age is on the poop deck; antiquity reposes in a saloon cabin; and pleasure is represented by a smiling seaman in blue serge, who is taking a turn at the helm. The boy at the prow is taking in all he can of the keen, fresh sea-breeze, his ulster fluttering in the wind; a careful mother calls out: "Archie, had

ye no' better put on a scarf? The wind is cold the morn." Archie shakes his head impatiently, and a sister is despatched with a wrap with strict injunctions to tie it carefully round his throat. Meantime the brown banks of Bournemouth fade in the distance, and we near a great headland of grey chalk, the projecting angle of which has been chiselled by the waves into sundry rude columns, about which the gentle surf is washing in a friendly way. The stoutest of these pillars is called "Old Harry," whether after the much married King or the despot of the lower regions is not quite clear. A smaller pinnacle, by its name of "Harry's Wife," seems to favour the former theory. But then, as Archie's sister asks—a slender, shapely girl, with clear blue eyes and healthy, sun-browned face—"Why are there no more?" "That's 'cause he drowned all the others," explains a sailor-man who has joined in the discussion.

Somewhere off this headland was wrecked a great fleet of invading Danes in King Alfred's time; but apart from their having been the means of drowning a good many of England's enemies, as well as her own native seamen, these cliffs along which we are steaming afford a good object lesson in geology. The white or grey chalk which runs in such even lines, like courses of masonry, is suddenly bent upwards, and the whole plug cut off like so much cake tobacco. Then come the red sands, which geologists pleasantly call green, all tipped on end; and these sands scooped out give Swanage Bay its pleasant shelving shore, behind which rise low, terraced hills of limestone, belonging to the famous Purbeck series.

Solid and grey stands Swanage, looking over its pleasant bay. The houses of grey limestone are roofed with slabs of the same, mellowed by time and weather. There is the grey church with its grey, square tower, and beyond rise the low, grey hills terraced in grey, dusty quarries. A few grey ships with grey sails are loading grey slabs at the quay. A stream pelts down from a grey mill. All about are piles of paving stones, cisterns, sinks, and all kinds of homely articles fashioned out of the prevailing stone.

There is half an hour to spare before the train starts for Corfe, and that gives time for a hasty visit to the church. Tradition has something to say about the sturdy square tower:

Half church of God, half tower against the Scot,

or rather, against the Dane in this case, who was once much in evidence in these parts. But the lower part of the tower alone can claim antiquity, and that is only of interest to a connoisseur in ancient masonry. The way up is by an outside stair, which lands us in the ringers' loft, with ropes depending from a fine peal of bells hanging among dim rafters overhead. All round on the walls are portraits of famous ringers, and in one corner is a mechanical arrangement for ringing the chimes. Coming down from above are figures, which prove to be a curate and an enthusiastic parish clerk, or perhaps sexton. The latter insists on our going to the top—"A beautiful view; you must not miss it." Agricola is half-way up already, and his friend Tacitus follows more gingerly; among bells and ropes, and up dizzy ladders that creak and sway ominously, to the very lead-covered roof. All round is opened the panorama of sea and land, the grey roofs of old Swanage just below, the slates, and tiles, and red facings of new Swanage scattered over shore and cliff, the limestone hills honey-combed with quarries, and all shut in by the green sea on one hand, and the green fields on the other; the hues of the sea chequered by shoal and sandbank, and the fields showing the varied tints of the coming crops. Of a darker shade are the downs that close the view in the shadow of threatening clouds, and a notch in the ridge, where the clouds hang thickest, shows the one opening where Corfe Gate breaks the serried line of hills—the bulwark of Purbeck Isle. From that notch in the chalk down is also to be seen the steam of an approaching train rising white against the dark clouds. That train will be ours before long; that is, when it has reached Swanage, discharged its passengers, and had its engine fixed on the other way. And as the way down is long and certainly steep, adieu to Swanage tower and its pleasant, chatty guardian.

The train for Corfe, when we reach it, is already well filled with the passengers of two excursion steamers. Our friend the boy is going, of course, and eyes us benevolently through his pince-nez. But he is wild when he hears we have been up to the top of the tower while he has been ignobly reading the advertisements at the station. "But that comes of travelling with women-folk," he adds, "who have no enterprise." Then we glide away through a pleasant fertile country with

great ploughed fields, all shining with the polished corn-blades, or green with young turnips, or mottled with bean-stalks. But Agricola is not quite pleased with it all, nor with the sheep that are grazing here and there on green pastures. Agricola would put the sheep on the turnips and the beans on the sheep, and the corn-land he would lay down in permanent pasture, and the pasture he would crop with rye grass and clover. The boy regards him, with admiring interest, as one who can work wonders. All this time the train has travelled along the foot of the downs, the green summits of which rise high above us; but now we take an abrupt turn and wind right in among them all, and this means that we are actually within the once famous Corfe Gate.

Once within the gap and the castle rises nobly before us, standing on a rocky eminence in the very middle of the gate, and looking for such enemies as it may encounter therein, all broken and shattered as it is. There is sixpence to pay at the gate, but that clears the whole show, as the boy's sister remarks, who does not always speak the pure classical English which her parents and teachers inculcate. The enceinte of Corfe Castle is in shape very much like the shape of the side of a well-worn side-spring boot. You enter at the ankle, where in the old boot there is a fragment of a strap, by an important gate, once defended by draw-bridge and portcullis. Across the instep runs the inner line of defence, with another well-defended gate, now cracked in two like a nut by the force of gunpowder, one half having slid down the hill while the other remains in its original position. The heel of the boot, where the rock rises in a precipitous commanding brow, is occupied by a cluster of buildings, all ruined and broken and smashed up together by the same powerful agency. The men who blew it all up were the Cromwellians of course. One Lady Banks, in the days of the civil wars, was foolish enough to hold out in her superannuated feudal castle against the Parliament. The place was incapable of defence against a regular attack; but as soon as it was surrendered the enemy thought fit to blow it up with gunpowder. And that was a pity, for it was a fine old fortress, well preserved, and once a royal seat of the Norman Kings.

Archie and his sister are racing up the steps or clambering over grassy mounds to reach the chief block of ruins. They form

a capital hide-and-seek place. Laughing girls run about the ruins, conceal themselves in old chimneys, pry out hidden recesses, and are elated at having discovered a dungeon. But the most part of us are serious and even elderly people, who take our ruins as a kind of duty, and, perhaps, as incitements to longevity. We are not the gay and festive excursionists you might fancy. We are moving about like this under medical constraint. As men, we discuss our symptoms and our favourite remedies; and when these subjects are exhausted we talk about Brighton "A" Stock or North-Eastern Preference. As for the ladies, you may hear them discussing household management and the fashions in a sober, serious spirit.

But we are not quite all "old crocks," which is Archie's sister's description of us. Here is a travelled, buxom widow with two sallow daughters, who is surveying our ruins in a patronising way through her eye-glasses. "Just like Pompey, ain't it, girls?" she cries. "Just like the ruins of Pompey. And both destroyed by an earthquake. Ain't it curious?" Archie had made up his mind to straighten out that lady's intellect a little; but before he had adjusted his pince-nez—an instrument which has its disadvantages for a boy fond of tennis and cricket, but that gives its possessor superiority in the encounter of wits—the volatile widow had vanished.

Corfe, indeed, has the remains of a fine Norman keep, shattered by gunpowder, but with one angle of its square still intact—a keep which is coeval with that of Rochester, and of London Tower, and which served as a state prison as well as a royal residence. Robert, Duke of Normandy, was here for some time a captive. The tower was captured and recaptured in the wars between Maud and Stephen. Griffith, a Welsh Prince, was a prisoner here to King John, who soon after shut up in his ogre's tower a bevy of fair dames. Eleanor, the damsel of Bretagne, was the first of these, the sister of that Arthur whom the King had blinded and destroyed. Then there were two Scotch Princesses, held in a kind of honourable captivity till John could find husbands for them. And then John's Queen herself was sent to join the party, and would have perished there probably, but for that fortunate fit of indigestion that made an end of her tyrant. There is a gruesome story of twenty-four French Knights starved to death in the

dismal dungeons below. And then there is the story of Peter the Prophet, of Pompey, a title too temptingly alliterative to be passed over.

Peter the Prophet had promised the people of England, not violently attached to their King, that they should be rid of their tyrant before next Ascension Day. The King heard of this, and caught master Peter and carried him off to his castle of Corfe. It is evident that there was an element of fairness in the King's character, and a kind of grim, rudimentary humour. "Peter," in effect said the sovereign to the prophet, "Heaven forbid that I should harm any one favoured with Divine inspiration! You shall be kept safe, and with a whole skin, till it appears whether you are a true prophet or no." Unluckily for Peter, both he and the King were alive on Ascension morn, and before noon Peter's body was swinging from the castle walls.

The shadow of a jackdaw and its mournful croak give us all a start at this moment, as we look upwards half expecting to see the dangling corpse. But there is something still more satisfying to come, for one who knows the castle well takes us in hand and leads us away to what, in our mental ground-plan of the castle, we shall call the toe of the boot. Here, to the great delight of Archie and his sister, the gallows are pointed out to them—a stone beam, worn here and there into grooves, with the pit into which the prisoner fell when *sus. per coll.* It is needless to insist upon the detail that the wall in which the gallows is inserted is later than King John's time.

But in this same part of the castle is a still more interesting relic—a bit of her-ring-bone masonry which may be referred to pre-Norman times, and which was probably part of the original chapel of St. Aldhelm, about which was built the stockaded dwelling of the West Saxon Kings. This brings us in touch with Elfrida, the wicked step-mother who here slew her step-son Edward, the noble young King, as he took the stirrup-cup from her hands.

But now the clouds which have been threatening so long begin to break over our heads. There is a stampede for the shelter of an old gateway. But the soak promises to be persistent, the clouds settling down all round in a dreary and depressing way; and through some fissure made by the gunpowder of the Roundheads the water finds its way and patters down upon us. It will be best to make a rush for the

station, which at all events is waterproof. And a train is just in; but it proves to be going the wrong way for us, who are due at Swanage this evening. Never mind; here is promise of a change of scene among unexplored regions. There will be time to get to Wareham and back before the boat starts for home.

Over the wind-swept waste the falling rain drives heavily, and the wind whistles through the crevices of the railway carriage as the train traverses the dreary, watery plain. And then there is a break in the bad weather. A gleam of sunshine steals across, and it is possible to imagine that the desert may have a charm of its own, sombre and unpretending. The gleam of the sea is in the horizon yonder, and streaks of channels and havens gleam in the distance; and from the heathy level shows here and there the mast of a ship lying safe in some secluded haven. Out of the waste, with its rivers that wind aimlessly here and there, rises a wooded knoll, that looks like some natural hill, set there to watch over this fennyland. And this knoll somebody points out as Wareham, although there is nothing to be seen of any town. Even at Wareham station we have to take the town on trust. A road runs straight for the wooded knoll, which is distant perhaps half a mile, and following the road, we must, we are told, reach Wareham town.

There is a river to cross, and, having passed the bridge, we come to the foot of the knoll, which we now see to be formed by mighty earthen ramparts. A kind of awe inspires one on first sight of these huge mounds, which might be the work of primeval giants. But for the cheerful bustle of the station we have just left, and for the sight of sundry vehicles coming towards us at a jog trot over the level road, one might hesitate to go any further, the place looks so eerie and desolate. The road pierces the ramparts by a cutting, and there are traces on either hand of batteries and horn works, quite pigmy-like in comparison with the great ramparts; and these, no doubt, are relics of the civil wars, when Wareham, for a time, stood out behind its mighty ramparts for the King. Still, there is nothing to show for a town, and a deserted mediæval building on the bank above seems hardly to belong to the busy haunts of men, although some printed notices affixed to its venerable door seem to speak of the existence of civilisation in the neigh-

bourhood, as represented by rates and taxes.

Then, without any preparation in the way of suburbs, we find ourselves suddenly in the High Street of Wareham—a cheerful, cleanly High Street, with its shops and snug dwellings, a town hall, and a church with a fine ancient tower. At the end of the High Street is a bridge, which crosses river number two—a shallow tidal channel, bordered by a grass-grown quay, close to which a round-topped mon-ticle represents the old castle of Wareham, just as the shallow, reedy channel represents the once famous port of Wareham.

The snug High Street and modern town is little more than a squatter in the midst of the old fortified enclosure, now a world too wide for its shrunken proportions. But the enclosed space, where not occupied by the High Street and one cross street of the modern town, is intersected everywhere by lanes running at right angles to each other, some bordered by cottages, and others by gardens or cultivated lands. And these lanes are evidently the streets of the deserted city. For a populous city here undoubtedly existed, populous, it is probable, even in the time of the Romans, and with its mighty entrenchments even then ancient. But Wareham first appears in history Anno Domini 876, when a great body of Danes who had galloped across the country—on stolen horses—from Cambridge, took the place by surprise, destroying a nunnery of holy virgins which had long been in existence there. Here was an impregnable fort for the Northmen, and with a good harbour for their ships. Alfred did not venture to attack them in their stronghold, but pressed the siege of Exeter, which was also held by the Danes. Then the Northmen abandoned Wareham to join their countrymen in the defence of Exeter, some taking horse over the land, and others embarking in their ships. This last division was happily destroyed by a tempest in the bay, as has been already told.

When the Danes had been settled with, Wareham enjoyed a season of prosperity, although when one set of invaders were disposed of, another “still more ferocious” appeared. Yet on the whole there seems to have been a clear century during which Wareham possessed itself in peace, with two moneyers always coining money, and a succession of native Kings and Princes living a good deal in the neighbourhood, and spending the money as fast as it was

coined. From Wareham, Edward the King started on his fatal ride, what time he visited the perfidious step-mother at Corfe; and to Wareham was brought back the mutilated corpse. Wareham suffered severely after that in the Norman Conquest. A third of its houses had been devastated and destroyed when “Domesday” was compiled.

But the situation of Wareham as a convenient and well-defended port brought it into constant communication with France. Here Henry Plantagenet landed from Anjou during the wars with King Stephen, and there were many struggles to capture or recover the place, which cost the townspeople dear. But good trade with France soon reinstated them in prosperity.

Then, during the Plantagenet era, there came upon Wareham a worse misfortune than war. Like Winchelsea, she experienced the fickleness of the winds and waves. Great storms silted up her harbour, and left her stranded high, if not altogether dry, upon her river bank. Wareham indeed sent three ships and fifty-nine men to help King Edward the Third at the siege of Calais, but that was her last effort. The Black Death completed her ruin, her streets became grass-grown, and her houses sunk to decay. And Leland, visiting the place in the sixteenth century, writes: “Wareham is now within the waulles fallen down, and made into gardins for garlike.”

And on these garlic gardens we of the nineteenth century are looking down from the huge ramparts, where the children have made paths and trackways among the brushwood and brambles. It is on the western side that the ramparts are highest and strongest, as if an attack from that quarter were most to be dreaded, and there are distinct traces of a double rampart with a ditch between—a form of defensive work which is characteristic of the district. Close by the angle of the rampart is a rough slope that still bears the name of the Bloody Bank, a name which is appropriate enough; for here was set up the gallows on which, after the “bloody assize” of Judge Jefferies which followed Monmouth’s defeat at Sedgemoor, some of the sturdiest and best of the west country worthies were hanged with every circumstance of opprobrium and disgrace.

The ramparts afford a good view of the surrounding country, fenny and flat, with here and there an ancient cairn or fort rising above the surrounding level—a

country that is enriched by many legends concerning good King Alfred and his vicissitudes, the scenes of which are laid in this marvellous fastness. And as for Wareham itself, it is unique among English towns for having maintained its position, surrounded by its prehistoric ramparts, for a period that goes beyond all written chronicles. Unfortunately not much has survived the storm and stress of centuries, and what tempests and civil wars had spared was almost obliterated by a great fire in 1762. The calamity was so complete that a general effort was made for the relief of the sufferers. A special Act of Parliament was passed for rebuilding the town, with this proviso among others—that no thatched roofs or hayricks should be permitted in the main streets.

But now, from our point of vantage on the ramparts, we can see in the distance the steam of the approaching train that is to carry us back to Swanage, and there is just time to reach the station and take our places. At Corfe we pick up Archie and his people, and, indeed, the most part of the passengers for the two steamers. "You might have told me where you were going," said the boy, a little aggrieved by our somewhat rose-coloured account of Wareham. It would have made a good holiday paper for Dr. Blimber. For Archie is sorrowfully conscious that the short vacation is coming to an end, and that in a day or two he will be one of the throng pressing in at the gates of St. Polonius. A similar feeling makes the rest of us rather taciturn, and the evening, too, is turning out grey and chilly, so that places near the engine-room are at a premium on the voyage home, and no one is sorry when the landing-place is reached and the cheerful lights of Bournemouth are glittering before us.

"GOING WRONG."

ONE day last spring I was crossing the Green Park on my way to Piccadilly. The trees had put on their early leafage; the sun shone at intervals just to melt the hailstones that fell from the clouds which, at other intervals, veiled his beams. Naturally the park was not very full. As I entered the last long straight reach of path I remarked that I was alone in it; save for one other personage who was approaching from the opposite end. When we got within twenty yards of one another I found that he was regarding me keenly,

and when we were level he stopped and greeted me with a respectful salute. He was ill-dressed, unshaven, not over clean, and bearing generally a look of disrespectability, and his face, for the moment, was quite unfamiliar to me; but it was quite clear that he knew well enough who I was, so I halted also and waited for him to declare himself.

"Beg your pardon, sir," he began, "dare say you didn't expect to see me here, sir, not at this time o' day, sir," and then, seeing that my face was still unilluminated by any light of recognition, he added: "William, sir, who used to be drawing-room waiter at the 'Addison.'"

Of course it was William, but changed almost beyond belief. It happened that I was just then bound for the "Addison," where I had not been for some weeks. Consequently I had not missed the presence of the deft-handed, smooth-footed minister, who, without being asked, would bring me the magazines he knew I affected as soon as I sat down; and, when he thought I looked as if I wanted it, would suggest soda-water with an appropriate qualifier; and sometimes would smuggle into my hands the special edition of the "Recorder" under the very eyes of that devourer of telegrams, the redoubtable Jarley himself. I could scarcely imagine the "Addison" apart from William, and my first thought was that I would take my name off at once. What could have brought William into this evil plight was, of course, the question which rose immediately to my lips. In reply he entered upon a very long story, insensible apparently, in spite of his scanty clothing, to the cold which was gnawing at my fingers and toes, at the close of which I was as wise as I was at the beginning. After his long sojourn at the "Addison," William certainly ought to have been able to put his meaning into coherent words; but perhaps my suspicions as to some moral obliquity which had been the cause of William's downfall would have been all the stronger had I been able to grasp its purport thoroughly. He wound up with a remark which has ever since haunted my memory.

"You see, sir," said William, "I got wrong with them as was too much for me, and things went agin me."

William, though certainly down in his luck, was not despondent.

"I've had rather a rough time of it for the last few weeks, sir, but I expect I shall do all right now. I've heard of a good

place in Surrey and I'm going to it to-morrow."

"Ah! I'm glad to hear that, William," said I. I confess that William's appearance did not strike me as that of a man on the eve of a comfortable settlement, and I was surprised as well as pleased that the wind had been tempered for him so soon after he had been shorn of the club livery. But as I moved away, after congratulating him on his good luck, I had a sort of feeling that William had not quite done with me, and so it turned out.

"Beg your pardon, sir," he said touching his hat with the servility of a true street loafer, "but I said to myself, as I see you comin' along, that you would very likely give me a trifle to help me down the road."

As I listened to this last speech my surprise at William's good luck was changed into suspicion as to his veracity. I began to doubt very much whether that good place down in Surrey—a somewhat vague address—had any real existence. Men with the assured future of a good place to go to on the morrow surely have no need to beg for trifles to help them down the road. But I had nothing but my suspicions against William's positive assertion, and I was little inclined to stop and canvass the question and ask for confirmation with the breezes of spring playing round my ears; so, as the easiest way out of the situation, which was becoming an embarrassing one, I put my hand in my pocket and gave William a shilling—I think from his manner that he was expecting half-a-crown—and walked on to the "Addison."

William had come to grief—so much was certain. The detailed story of his misfortune and of his recovery, which was to begin to-morrow down in Surrey, rested on no such firm foundation. As I sat in the club that afternoon, grumbling at the incompetence of his successor, and thinking of the scene above chronicled, it was brought home to me how easily things may "go agin" one if one, like William, gets wrong with those who are too much for one's strength, and how difficult it must be for ordinary mortals to escape thus getting wrong if William, who always seemed to be the very soul of tact and good temper, could not escape calamity. No doubt, if one had the time and inclination to search, one might find the origin of every great catastrophe in some trifling offence, some "getting wrong" of which the culprit was

probably quite unconscious. As I worked the question out I wondered how it is that any of us survive, walking as we walk every day over hidden fires. When one calculates how many reputations are impaired and how much self-esteem slaughtered every day through want of tact, it becomes a mystery that any self-respecting people of good repute survive. Once get wrong with those who have both power and inclination to make you smart, and the chances are ten to one that before long you will smart in earnest.

In the matter of taking the huff there is absolutely no rule. One man will be indifferent to, or even a little pleased with, treatment which would give to another—apparently very much like the first—the most deadly offence; and, to make the matter still more complicated, there is no reason why—through sins of the liver, or by the adverse movement of stocks in the City, or from the prick of some one or other of the countless thorns which fringe the daily path even of those who walk most securely—the same demeanour towards some influential friend which pleased him on Saturday may not affront him on Monday. And those forces which are ultimately destined to prove too much for us may be unconsciously set in motion as we babble innocently our commonplaces under the impression that we are making ourselves very agreeable. If you do a man an important service, or tread on his toes figuratively or in the flesh, or rob him of his sweetheart, or correct his facts in company, you may naturally expect that things will "go agin" you hereafter if ever he should have it in his power to control their course; but you may fare just as ill from some trifling sin of omission or commission over which conscience raises no alarm. Our old friend the sword of Damocles hangs permanently over our heads. Of a truth it adds somewhat to the wild joy of living to know that every moment we spend with our fellows may be forging a bolt to crash down on our heads out of a clear sky. We meet a friend just as we are leaving the club, and turn back and go into the billiard-room. Then, by the perverse run of the balls, we beat him rather badly; or peradventure we merely go into the smoking-room for a cigar and a chat, and in the course of this tell him an amended and improved version of a story we heard from him a week ago; or we may meet him at some starchy dinner-party, and remind him, at an inopportune moment, of

the days when we both sojourned in Bohemia, and how we fared in that much over-rated land. The result may be just the same in either case. Our friend will be our enemy for the future, and things will "go agin" us if they can be made to work according to his inclination. But it should be carefully noted that something more is needed than the conciliation of our more influential friends. We must be circumspect in our carriage towards all sorts and conditions of men. The whirlpools of time and circumstance sweep us hither and thither in such unending combinations that we should never be sure the meanest of mankind may not have it in his power some day to deal us a blow, should he be thus disposed. There is much wisdom in the saying that it is better to have the crossing-sweeper for a friend than for a foe.

Seeing how easy a matter it is to say some word or to do some deed which may ultimately lead to the weaving of a Nessus shirt for our own backs; seeing likewise how disagreeable, or even fatal, the wearing of hosiery of this sort may prove, it is wonderful that in this age of literary activity some handbook on the subject has not been compiled for general use. If it could only secure from the arbiters of the contemporary world of letters the recognition it deserved, it would find its place on every bookstall in the kingdom. It would certainly be quite as useful as the manuals of domestic medicine, with their cautions against catching cold, or getting sunstroke, or the excessive consumption of fruit in hot weather; to say nothing of their directions as to how to treat snake and dog bites, and the extraordinary procedure to be followed in dealing with any one apparently drowned, by "rolling him or her upon empty casks." It should give rules for the regulation of our conduct in the presence of certain well-recognised characteristics and eccentricities, so that any one carefully following these might, at all events, reduce considerably the chance of getting wrong with anybody.

Surely the world has need for no more handbooks dealing with special periods of history; surely the tragedies of Euripides have been edited often enough "for the use of schools." I throw out this suggestion for the benefit of the scholarly young men who spend so much of their time in bringing out booklets of the sort above named. The subject I am proposing I am sure would be quite as interesting, and

even more calculated to bring into play the literary faculty. To pursue it would be to cultivate a knowledge of human nature, and the amount of this knowledge, gathered during the hours of research, would be more serviceable, both as mental discipline and as a practical equipment for the fight with the world, than the most intimate acquaintance with the uses of the acrostic, or with the real character of King Richard the Third.

What a chapter might be written on "The Treatment of Bachelor Uncles," or on "Criticism of Amateur Work." What a treasure such a work would have been for Tom Beamish, a friend of my youth. Tom had no profession and very little cash to call his own, and we used to declare that he was being brought up to follow the trade of a nephew. Anyhow, he stood in that relation to an uncle of the right sort, and, had his parents and guardians taught him to watch narrowly against giving offence with half the zeal they taught him the multiplication table and the Thirty-nine Articles, he would, doubtless, have netted the whole of the avuncular fortune, and have been now living on the same and entertaining his friends, instead of having to look at every sixpence before spending it in order to make the slender annuity which the old gentleman ultimately left him hold out. Tom came to grief entirely through an inability to see that he was getting wrong with the old gentleman. He was an excellent fellow, and a man of large ideas. Details were as repulsive to him as they were to Mr. Harold Skimpole, and he rarely had any small change or postage-stamps about him. The uncle was a fine, open-hearted old boy, hating meanness beyond everything, and delighting to give in splendid fashion. But he hated to give by dribblets, and, as ill luck would have it, Tom was too often a petitioner for minute benefactions in the form of half-crowns to pay cabmen; or stamps for the franking of letters which must be posted immediately; or for glasses of a particular brandy which the old gentleman specially prized with his after-lunch coffee. He was genuinely fond of Tom, and was always ready to give him free quarters by the month at a time, and the use of his park hack into the bargain, and the best wine without stint every night, and a handsome cheque now and then to make smooth Tom's relations with his tradesmen. But the worry of having to unbutton

his coat and take out his pocket-book and hand over three or four penny stamps, and of bringing out half-crowns at all hours of the day, and, worst of all, of being asked for the key of the liqueur-case, wherein was secured that precious cognac, at last established a raw, and played havoc with poor Tom's fortunes. He, poor fellow, went blindly on towards his fate, till one day the old gentleman had a long interview with his solicitor, and a week after died in a fit. Tom Beamish, when he listened to the terms of his uncle's last will, was in danger of a like visitation. I met him about a month later, and then he had in some measure recovered his composure, though he was totally unable to account for the evil turn things had taken, or to give a more coherent reason for his discomfiture than William's, namely: that somehow things had "gone agin" him.

It is only human that when we come to review some disastrous epoch of our lives, we should regard ourselves as martyrs to untoward circumstance, and minimise, or even ignore altogether, our own share in our own downfall. William's voice and eye that day in the park when he told me of his ill fortune, hinted at all manner of dark conspiracies and machinations of hidden foes. They gave no indication that he was conscious of any maladroit action of his own; but perhaps after all he may have been quite sincere. The snares which entangle our feet are often woven of almost invisible threads, and William may have stepped into one unwittingly. Now I come to consider the matter I perceive that a waiter's duty in the drawing-room at the "Addison" is one which demands that a man should walk warily if he would avoid giving offence. I have lost my temper there more than once. I have got wrong with several influential members; and, for all I know, things may already be in train to "go agin" me. Supposing that Jenkins should have kept William on the run all the afternoon in search of a back number of the "Ratiocinator," a print which is consigned every Saturday—too late some members think—to its dusty pile of back numbers in the cockloft; supposing that Stilling may have caught him alone in the library, and, for want of another victim, have given him the full details of the latest theory of Bimetallism; supposing that he should have roused Jarley's ire and consequent torrent of abuse by giving him the 6.45 instead of the 7 edition of the

"Recorder," he may not unnaturally have displayed a little temper over any one of these visitations. If William's fall dates from some such mischance as these, he has my full sympathy. I hope and almost believe it may be so; yet I cannot quite clear my mind of doubts, and these are strong enough to keep me away from that spot in the park where I met him for some weeks to come. I have a horror of seeing any one in a position of humiliation or embarrassment, and especially any one who has done me so many good turns as William has. I have a dark suspicion that the good place down in Surrey is a sort of local Mrs. Harris, and that William still haunts that alley on the look-out for members of the "Addison," from whom he may gather a harvest of somethings to help him down the road.

A VICTIM TO ART.

I CONSIDER that the poverty which afflicts this great country is due to the fact that wealth is in the wrong hands; and when I say the poverty, I mean my poverty which afflicts me. For instance, if Jones's, Brown's, and Robinson's wealth were in my hands, then I should cease to be poor. And, therefore, I ask, and I want an answer to my enquiry, Why don't I cease to be poor?

Several of us joined ourselves together into an association the avowed purpose of which was to enquire into the present working of the so-called Economic Laws. Our motto was "Social Progress," by which, of course, we meant our progress. There was not one of the members who could lend me half-a-crown, so I knew that we were in earnest. Then Tom Ferguson had a fortune left him by an uncle in Australia, and he resigned his membership of the association; and George Somers sold a book or two, and he resigned; and Phil Moray pulled off a pot on the Liverpool Cup, and went in for bookmaking on a large scale, and he resigned; and similar things happened to all the rest of them, and they all resigned. And nothing happened to me, so I hung on, and I still am hanging on. I am the only member left of that association. Our motto, "Social Progress," is unchanged. I am pursuing with, I may truthfully affirm, undiminished ardour my enquiry into the present working of the so-called Economic Laws, and what I want to know is this:

I am an artist by profession, and because I paint shocking bad pictures, is that any reason why I should be unable to sell them? That is one thing I want to know. The other day I took nine or ten of my works to a pawnbroker, and the fellow behind the counter, after he had asked which was the right way up, and which was the back, and which was the front, suggested that, in his opinion, a recourse on my part to house-painting, door-staining, whitewashing, and that sort of thing might bring about a change in my prospects for the better. The fellow not only insulted me, and meant to insult me, but he also meant to trample on a fellow-creature. He attempted nothing short of a violation of the liberty of the subject. I have no taste for house-painting; I have still less for door-staining; and as for whitewashing, the idea is simply absurd. He added, that pawnbroker's assistant, that if I scraped the paint off, he might, possibly, see his way to lend me twopence upon each canvas. I need scarcely observe that I declined his offer. I brought the pictures back with me, and there they are, at this moment of writing, all in a row in front of me. I wonder who is going to buy them. That is another thing I should like to know.

It might be suspected, by those who do not know me, that I am intending a joke by a repetition of my former enquiry: Why, because I paint bad pictures, should I be unable to sell them? I consider that a most rational question to ask. And if you consider it for a moment you will perceive where the point which I am aiming at comes in.

Sir John Everett Millais sells his pictures. You say that's because he paints good pictures. I say that's just the reason why he shouldn't sell his pictures. You don't suppose that I paint bad pictures because I want to paint bad pictures? You are very much mistaken if you do. Whenever I look at that row of pictures which is in front of me, and at the other works of art which litter my establishment, I almost have an attack of jaundice. It is quite impossible that I should not know whereabouts in art they rank. I am not prepared to admit that they are as bad as everybody says they are, else I were less, or more, than human. But that pawnbroker's assistant is not by any means the only person who has given me his unbiassed opinion of their merits. I was once engaged to the dearest girl in

the world. I believe she loved me until I took her, upon one occasion, to my studio to show her the products of my brain, and eye, and hand. The next day she returned my letters. I have never spoken to her since; she has certainly never spoken to me. There was no necessity for her to give any reasons. I understood. I have lost heaps of friends by taking them to see my studio. They said that they did not mind me so much, but they could not endure even the remote possibility of being required to spend, by way of a sacrifice on friendship's sacred altar, another quarter of an hour in that chamber of horrors.

And yet I say, without fear of contradiction, that Sir John Everett Millais is not fonder of painting than I am. And he can paint. I wish I could; I would ask no more. am almost positive that if I could paint I should be content with painting without expecting to sell the things I painted. It seems to me that the gift of painting is, and ought to be, enough for any man. What is man that he should ask for more?

No man can realise, except from experience — and then may angels and ministers of grace defend him, he will need them all!—what it means to have a painter's passion without a painter's power. We have all read about men languishing for an unattainable woman, and of their lives being withered and wasted by unrequited passion. I believe that we only read about these men. But, if you know where to look for them, you can meet, any day, with men, and plenty of them, whose lives have been withered and wasted by an unrequited passion for art. I am not speaking of unrecognised and unrewarded geniuses—Michael Angelos who go down to the grave unbought and unhung. I do not believe in them much more than I believe in the men in the love tales. I am speaking of the men who cannot paint, who never will paint, but who do paint, and who will go on painting to the day they die. I am speaking, in fact, of men like myself.

A well-known dramatist, who is dead now, and who was a friend of mine till I took him to my studio, once told me a story of a man who wanted to be a playwright—a dramatist, like the dramatist who told the tale. He was a very funny man, that dramatist, and he told a story very well. That particular story to which I am alluding—I shan't forget how I roared with laughter as he told it; you

won't laugh when I tell it; nobody ever does laugh when I tell a story, except when it approaches the pathetic — was about a man who was always writing plays. He began writing plays when he was quite a child. No one could keep him from playwriting, not even his father, or his mother, or any one. As a boy he would lie awake at night conceiving plots. When he fell asleep he would dream of them for a change. Long before he was out of his teens he had, over and over again, submitted plays to every manager in London. He had a system of his own about the thing. He would start a play at the St. James's, then send it right along the Strand, until it reached the end of the line. Then he would send it north, then south, of the line. Then to such theatres as the Britannia and the Surrey. Then he would send it to the actors, giving a critic now and then a chance. Then he would send it to the dramatists whose plays were acted, and suggest collaboration. He had even been known to submit his plays to amateurs. It was his ruling passion. That dramatist declared—in his very funniest way—that if you had torn that young man limb from limb, each separate limb would have started off, then and there, upon its own account, to write a play.

One would suppose that a young man who was so very much in earnest, who had so set his heart on doing a certain thing, would at least have some rudimentary notions of how the thing ought to be done. But that was where all the point of the joke came in. You may not see it, but I know I did when I was told the story. That dramatist assured me that the things which the young man produced were as much like plays as some people's attempts in the artistic line—here he looked very straight at me, and I have always suspected him of some latent meaning—are like pictures. The young man, in other words, had as much capacity for writing an actable play as he had for swallowing the moon. One could not but think that that young man—I was told that he was an honest, conscientious, and, in his way, a shrewd little fellow—would have come, in course of time, to suspect the true state of the case himself; and I was informed by the narrator that there was reason to believe that this was so. That there were grounds for the conviction that he not only suspected, but that he knew, not only that he was not able to write a decent actable

play, but that he never would be able to write an actable play, not though he lived to the age of Methuselah. But—and here was where another point of the joke came in; probably you won't be able to see it any clearer than you saw the other; I saw it, though, with most uncommon clearness—long after that knowledge was borne in upon him, he continued to produce plays, knowing all the time that they were worthless, at an average rate of one a month. His MSS. were battering at the playhouse doors to the hour of his death. His last words were an instruction to forward his latest three-act farce to Drury Lane.

How I did laugh at that story! It must have been the funny way in which that funny fellow told it, because when I had got away from him and thought it over, it seemed to me that it was a sort of story at which it would have been quite appropriate to cry. The idea of a man devoting his whole life to the attainment of an object for which he was naturally altogether unfitted does not seem to me to be, in itself, a funny idea. To me there is something about it which smacks of a wasted life. There must have been something which that fellow was able to do. As that pawnbroker's assistant suggested to me, he might have been a dab at whitewashing. Then why didn't he whitewash? I don't know.

That there are a lot of fellows about like that fellow in the story I have no doubt. I am more than half persuaded that the man who told it meant that I was just such another myself. And I am not by any means certain that he was wrong. I am sure that, if you saw me sometimes starting a picture, you would think that something was going to happen. I put my whole soul into my work. I doubt if any one could work more carefully. I paint, and erase, and re-paint, and re-erase. Why, I have spent weeks and weeks on less than a single inch of canvas! Talk about Meissonier! I doubt if Meissonier was anything like as conscientious as I am sometimes. Do not run away with the impression that it is just because I take too much care that I don't succeed. I have tried all sorts of methods. I have tried the Impressionist method—two splashes, a smudge, and a smear, and that kind of thing. I don't know what other men make of it; I never could make anything at all—not a little bit. And when any one was looking at an Impressionist picture of

mine, and observed that it might have been better if I had taken more trouble with it, I felt that in what he said there was perhaps a grain of truth. And somehow I did not see how a man could conscientiously expect to paint a picture, say nine feet by six, in less than twenty minutes. To listen to some men, you would think that, as regards the amount of wall space they can cover, whitewashers aren't in it.

So, when I gave up Impressionist methods, I took to taking pains. That seems to be about all I have taken to as yet. I once painted a picture of an interior; I called it "The Cottager's Hearthstone." I spent nearly nine months upon that hearthstone. One day, after I had given the thing the finishing touches, I showed it to a friend.

"What do you call it?" he asked.

I told him, "The Cottager's Hearthstone."

"Oh!"

He looked dubious. I have often seen people look that way when they have been looking at pictures of mine.

"Where's the hearthstone?"

I could have shown him where it was, if I had had heart enough to do it. When a man has made a hearthstone the feature of his picture, and has spent nine months on it in order to make it as unmistakeable as possible, to be asked to point out the part of the picture in which it is supposed to be, that is a discouraging request, from the point of view of the earnest struggler in the toils of art.

Do not run away with the impression that I have never received the least encouragement; or that I have never sold a picture. I have. I was once in Cornwall, before the Newlyn School was ever dreamt of; and that is not so very long ago. I was staying at a little place between St. Ives and Gurnard's Head, a sort of place at which people did sometimes go and stay. When I had been there about six months, there came to the same place a man and a woman. He was a pretty middle-aged man, and she was a pretty middle-aged young woman. And that's the truth, although they were on their honeymoon. They both of them rather took to me. I think that was because there was nothing else to take to. Poor creatures; they must have been fearfully bored. It was a fine country, but it was uncommonly bad weather; and, at their time of life, they liked to keep out of the

rain. I fancy they had been engaged somewhere in the neighbourhood of thirty years. It seemed hard that they should be rained on after all. But life is funny—if you like to laugh, as I do, when the tears are in your eyes.

They used to ask me questions about my work; and they looked at my pictures; and, so far as my experience goes, they made themselves peculiarly agreeable. And one day—it was the day before they went—Crockett came to me and said—his name was Crockett:

"Do you want to sell any of your pictures, Mr. Keddle?"

My name's Keddle. I assure you that when he asked that question a lump came into my throat; but I passed it off.

"Well, Mr. Crockett, I'm not an amateur. I'm a professional artist, you see."

"Oh!" He looked at me in what seemed rather a curious manner. "You are a professional artist. I see. Now what is the price you ask for your pictures?"

I smiled a superior smile.

"It depends. I do not price all my canvases alike. To which of my works were you particularly referring?"

I used for a painting-room a loft which was over a stable. It was roomy, if the light was not sometimes all that might have been desired. But I never have been able to make a point of a good north light; circumstances have been against me. When I asked Crockett to point out the work to which he was particularly referring, there came over him, as he glanced at the line of canvases which was hung on the wall, an unmistakeable shudder. The door was wide open—I had to have it open for the sake of the light, and, I fancy, it was a trifle chilly. He hesitated. Then, with what seemed a trembling hand, he pointed to a canvas which hung in the darkness near the end of the line. How he could make it out, from where we stood, was more than I could understand. I couldn't.

"That," I observed, "is not quite finished."

It was a fine work, though rather a study than a picture. I called it "A Pitch Black Night at Sea." Even regarded as a mere study in impressionism, it was a bit unfinished. In the state it was, I should not have quite cared to see it hanging in a gallery with my signature attached. He gave what seemed to me a sigh of relief when I remarked that it still needed some finishing touches.

"I'm sorry for that. The—the one next to it—the one beyond, I mean."

"I fancy, Mr. Crockett, that where you stand the light is bad. The canvas beyond is blank."

"So it is; the light is puzzling. It's the canvas this side, I meant."

That canvas was the failure of my life. I called it "A Fishy Harvest." It was a fishy picture—uncommonly. I had intended it to represent a heap of pilchards. They were as much like pilchards as they were like crocodiles. I never could paint fish.

"That canvas," I remarked a trifle stiffly, "is not for sale."

I imagine that he perceived that there was something in my voice, because he left off choosing.

"Now which canvas, in confidence, Mr. Keddle, would you particularly recommend to my notice?"

"The question, Mr. Crockett, is a somewhat invidious one. I had supposed, from what you said, that you had already fixed upon a work in your mind's eye. However, here is a work which, regarded—what shall I say?—as a 'tour de force,' is, I think, not unworthy serious attention. I may be wrong, but, speaking as the artist, such is frankly my opinion."

I pointed to a picture which I had finished the day before. I called it "A Seasoned Craft." It was a study of an old fisherman's face. The picture was all face. Rembrandt all over. Rembrandt treated in a novel, that is, in an original, that is, in my way.

Mr. Crockett looked at it, it struck me, a little dubiously.

"A very remarkable work, Mr. Keddle; very—very remarkable." The more he looked, the more dubious he seemed to grow. "Now, what—what, for instance, is the subject?"

"The subject, Mr. Crockett, speaks for itself."

"It—it certainly does. Just so. Very—very remarkable." I never saw a man look more fuddled. "What are you asking for the work, Mr. Keddle?"

I rattled my keys. I did not want to ask too much; at the same time I emphatically did not want to ask too little. The mischief was that, until that moment, I never had been asked what I wanted for one of my pictures.

"What are you prepared to offer, Mr. Crockett?"

"Would twenty pounds be near the figure?"

"Well——"

I don't know what he thought I was going to say, because, while I was wondering what to say, he sprung another fiver.

"Would twenty-five be nearer the mark? I doubt if my position would justify me in offering more than twenty-five. You know I am not a rich man, Mr. Keddle."

"Nor am I a mercenary man, Mr. Crockett. It is yours for twenty-five."

It was. He handed me the five fivers there and then, and he went off with the canvas under his arm. It was, in simple truth, the happiest moment of my life. Such was my extreme felicity that, in the happy excitement of the moment, I omitted the common courtesy of seeing him safe off the premises. The ladder which led from my painting-room was a steep one. A slight drizzle was falling, the rungs were slippery; suddenly there was the sound of a stumble. Mr. Crockett had come to grief. Before, however, I reached the door, he was on his feet again. The picture was in his hand.

"Anything wrong?" I asked.

"Thanks, no; I merely stumbled slightly."

"Picture hurt?"

"No, not—not at all."

He hurried off, with a very natural desire to get out of the rain. As for me, I danced a breakdown round the loft. I reckoned up my prospects, after the manner of the gentlemen who draw up the prospectuses of new companies. Twenty-five pounds for a picture. Even if I only sold one picture a month—and the demand might reasonably be expected to be greater—that would be three hundred pounds a year. I felt, with Dr. Pangloss, that one could live on three hundred pounds a year. I saw quite plainly that I had turned the corner—until I went to wash my hands for dinner.

My bedroom adjoined that which was occupied by Mr. and Mrs. Crockett. It was a very small room. It had, probably, originally been intended for a dressing-room. The two rooms were connected by a door, which, of course, was always kept hermetically sealed—that is, locked. But, on that particular occasion, a maid, probably, had passed through that door from room to room, and had forgotten to close it. Anyhow, when I reached my room, the Crocketts were in their room, and this is the conversation which floated towards me through the open door.

It was a moment or two before I realised who it was speaking. It was another moment or two before I realised that the door was open, and that it was through the open door that the voices came. By that time I was too prostrated to be able to draw attention to the fact, and I was still less capable of owning that I was playing the part of eavesdropper. I had to listen, whether I wanted to or not, that's the fact.

"What was the subject?"

"I assure you, my dear, that I have not the faintest notion."

"But didn't you ask him?"

"I did. He said it spoke for itself. If it did, it spoke to a man who was deaf."

"However came you to put both your feet through it?"

"As I was coming down the ladder, I had the wretched thing under my arm. It slipped. In trying to save it I lost my footing. I jumped, as it were, with both my feet right on to it. As it had fallen on its back, both my feet went through."

"Didn't he see what you had done?"

"Fortunately he did not; or he might have insisted upon my taking another in its place. He asked me if the picture was hurt. I said no. In saying so I hold that I was justified. Nothing could hurt such a picture as that was—nothing. Even a hole in it large enough to thrust one's head and shoulders through."

"And you gave him five-and-twenty pounds for it?"

"I did. My dear, our honeymoon has been sanctified by an act of kindness. When the landlord told me that this unfortunate man's payments were so much in arrear, and that yet he had not the heart to turn him out, I understood exactly what it was he meant. The poor creature is not actually insane; in some respects he is as sane as I am. But, in one direction, like Mr. Dick in 'David Copperfield,' he is distinctly wanting. Yet, in his fatuous simplicity, he is a loveable creature. The thought of him in his dirty, ill-lighted, ill-ventilated loft, disfiguring canvases, for which he can ill afford to pay, with what he calls his paintings, touched me to the heart. I could not proffer him a loan, and so——"

I waited to hear no more; I stole out of the room on tiptoe. I went back to my painting-room; and I have a sort of dim impression that I cried. It was so funny.

That was the only picture I ever sold; but that was not the only encouragement I've received. One day there came to my studio at Walham Green—I always called it "Fulham" in my letters—a man who looked to me as if he were something a little superior in the old clothes line. He introduced himself as he came in.

"I'm Gibbs," he said.

"Oh," I remarked; then I waited. I rather expected that he was going to ask me if I had anything to dispose of in the way of old bottles or kitchen-stuff. He stood in the middle of the room, looking about him at the works of art. I flatter myself that they made a pretty tolerable show. They were numerous enough, at any rate.

He had, I fancy, an unconscious habit of talking to himself out loud; because, all at once, he began to make very audible remarks.

"He has got it bad. Never saw anybody who had it worse. Why they don't shut some of 'em up I can't think. The chap must buy his colours from the oil-shops by the ton. Never saw anything like them. Never." Then he turned to me, and said, as if he were under the impression that he was for the first time making an audible remark: "I'll give you half-price for the lot of 'em."

He waved his arms with a comprehensive gesture which took in all my works of art. I was a little startled. If he was in earnest, then he was certainly a buyer on a wholesale scale.

"Half-price? What do you mean?"

"Mean? Why, what I say. I'll take the lot, and I'll give you half the price of the canvases; that's what I mean. Old canvases always do come handy to me; they're pretty well as good as new ones."

It dawned upon me what the unwashed scoundrel meant. He was actually offering to purchase the whole of my unrivalled collection—the fruits of a life of earnest labour!—and to pay for them half the price which I had originally paid for the canvases, when unpainted on. The enormity of the offer staggered me. But he continued, apparently wholly unconscious that he had given the slightest cause for offence:

"And I tell you what, I'll give you regular employment—eighteenpence an hour and your beer."

By degrees I began to get my breath.

"I am afraid I do not understand you, sir. May I ask to whom I have the pleasure of speaking?"

"I'm Gibbs."

"Indeed, sir. What Gibbs?"

"The Gibbs—what has the factory."

"Factory? What factory?"

He appeared to be genuinely surprised.

"Well, I've seen plenty of 'em who laid it on with a trowel, but I never saw one of them who'd never heard of the factory. Why, my lad, at my shop I turn out pictures by the acre. I supply all the markets of the world. You come and do my skies, and I'll give you regular work—eighteenpence an hour and your beer. It's wet and dry with me. The chap who's been doing my skies has got himself locked up again, and I've had enough of him, and that's the fact. You ain't, perhaps, quite up to our style; but you'll soon get into that. And, what's more, I'll give you half-price for all the canvases you've got. They'll want a lot of scraping, some of them will, but I don't mind."

I gathered, ultimately, that the fellow was the proprietor of a notorious "picture factory"—a place in which they put blank canvases on shelves running round the walls. Then a man comes along and paints in the sky on canvas No. 1, then passes on and paints in the sky on canvas No. 2; and so on all round the room. Then another man comes and paints in a sandy shore; then another, and paints in a tree; then another, and paints in the sea; then another, and paints in a ship upon the sea. Then those pictures, which are as like each other as two pins, are, by a beautiful division of labour, finished, so to speak, in less time than no time. And they call the first, "On a Smiling Shore"; the second, "Where the Wavelets Kiss the Sands"; the third, "The Ship that Sailed." They give each picture a different title. I believe they keep a man whose sole business it is to find the titles. He must be the most ingenious, not to say imaginative, man in the place. The whole affair is a beautiful exposition of the applicability to commercial purposes of the fine arts.

Mr. Gibbs wanted me to be the man to set "the pot a-billing." He wanted me to "do the skies." At eighteenpence an hour and my beer! He seemed unable to realise that I was in earnest when I declined his offer. He seemed to think that I was bidding for a rise; so he actually increased his terms a penny an hour. Nineteenpence an hour I was to have, and my beer. That was the most genuine encouragement I ever received.

When I still persisted in declining he showed a tendency to become abusive. Insolent—from my point of view—he had been all through. But I held out to the end. I heard him swear at me when he got outside the door.

No, I may not be able to paint. I am beginning to more than suspect I can't. I am even beginning to suspect that, strive and struggle as I may, I never shall paint well. I will aim high, though all my arrows may miss the mark. Not even for the guerdon of nineteenpence an hour and my beer will I make it my business to aim low. I love my art. I will not seek to degrade her; not though, throughout the years, to the end of my days she lets me woo in vain.

Therefore I say, why, because my pictures happen to be bad, should I be unable to sell them? If you reflect, you will perceive that the answer is not so obvious as might at first appear.

THE THIRTEENTH BRYDAIN.

By MARGARET MOULE.

Author of "Catherine Maidment's Burden," "Benefit of Clergy," "Mr. Wingrove's Ways," "The Vicar's Aunt," "Dick's Wife," etc.

CHAPTER XXXV.

It was an afternoon among the last days of October; the month had been an unusually dry and peaceful one, and the trees had scarcely lost any of their leaves. These had all turned, though, to wonderful shades of red, gold, and flame-colour, and the vividness of their tints seemed intensified by the pale cold blue of the serene autumnal sky which had shone down upon them all over Scotland since the beginning of the month.

The branch line to Carfrae station takes its way for some fifteen or twenty miles through a deep ravine or fissure in the hills. It is not a cutting, but a natural opening; and before the line defaced its beauty, the bright, narrow thread of a stream was the only dividing-line between the steep banks. These are wooded from top to bottom; and in between the trees is a tangled undergrowth of bracken, heather, and bilberries.

The train that leaves Glasgow at four o'clock was coming through this ravine—slowly, because there is just there a distinct incline uphill—and Erenne Brydain was gazing from her corner of one of the first-class carriages in it, at the wonderful

pictures made by the trees, and the constantly interchanging colours of the ground-work.

Her hands were clasped on her knee, and the novel she had been reading lay beneath them, open, but unheeded. She was dressed in a plain travelling-dress, wholly of grey. Her pretty face was slightly altered. Even in the course of the weeks that had gone by since her wedding-day, a new life and new happiness had traced some different lines in it; and there was a deep and serious sweetness about the great grey eyes that was new to them; but each of the changes, by intensifying all that was best in her face, made her more lovely.

Opposite to her sat her husband. The papers he had been reading were thrown on his knee, as was her novel on hers, but he was not, as she was, looking at the beautiful country. He was looking at his wife; he saw that she was absolutely unconscious of his scrutiny, and a little smile played round his mouth at the thought.

Brydain was looking very well, very handsome, and very happy. The excited happiness that had shone in his face on the day before his wedding had by no means left it; it was very plainly there, but in a more controlled and concentrated form that intensified it, and gave it the character of perfect, unruffled content. For perfect content was exactly what he felt. He had spent the very happiest time he had ever had in his life. The honeymoon is, of course, such by tradition, but to Brydain it had been no traditional happiness, it had been real. Every day he had grown to understand better the woman he had made his wife; and every day's understanding had made his love for her, if possible, stronger. He and Etenne were perfectly in accord; they looked forward to their future life with the simplest loving confidence in each other. And before no man in the world has there ever lain a fairer prospect than that which spread itself out before Keith Brydain.

He had money enough, and a certain prospect of more; he had an art in which he had already made a name for himself, and in which he would certainly excel; his life was before him to devote to that art; and he had won the woman who was to him the one woman in all the world for his wife.

His mind, as it had often done before during the past weeks, ran rapidly through all these various sources of his present happiness and content, and he looked

lovingly at the crowning point of it all—the lovely face opposite to him.

His eyes were unconsciously following a fresh curve made on Etenne's face by her keen look of delight in the beauty through which they were passing, when suddenly she moved her head, and broke all the curve up into a hundred others as she looked at her husband with a smile.

"Are we nearly there?" she said.

"No, I'm afraid not. We have another good thirty-five miles or so, sweetheart! Are you tired?"

"Tired! No, not the least little bit! I only asked because I wondered if Brydain would be like this is, or prettier still. Is it like this, Keith?"

"It isn't at all like this," he answered, smiling. "I told you, but I was half afraid you didn't realise it, that it was bleak and rather dreary at Brydain!"

"Oh, I don't believe you, Keith! I'm sorry it isn't like this, for I never saw anything prettier than these trees and the ferns, but I don't believe I shall think it bleak and dreary. I do so want to get there. You can't think how I want to see your home."

"It is very sweet of you!" he answered, looking at her lovingly. "But I am afraid you will be very disappointed. Of course it is my home; and I myself have never thought it so, but to a stranger, I know that the place is rather bleak."

"I'm not a stranger," she pleaded laughingly. "I think of it as if it belonged to me, Keith!"

He answered her only with a smile. And there was a silence. They were leaving the ravine now, for a flat expanse of moor; and Etenne, with a little sigh for the beauty of the trees, took up again the novel that she had laid down. But she had only turned a page or two, when she laid it down again suddenly.

"Keith!" she said to her husband, "there's something I've always forgotten to ask you."

"Ask me now," he answered, with a little laugh. "I'm at your service, madam!"

"Talking about Brydain reminded me," she said. "One day long ago—we were on the river, and it was before I knew you much—Tiny Kingston said something to Mr. Tredennis about a tradition that belonged to you—something belonging to your family, I mean. What is it, Keith? I've meant to ask you ever so many times, but I've forgotten. Do tell me!"

Brydain laid his paper down on the seat

beside him, and reaching across began to play with one of Etrenne's hands.

"I'll tell you, certainly," he said calmly.

To Brydain had come, during the last four months, the most curious mental change possible to a man. On the day when, after his own return from Scotland, he told Tredennis of his bitter disappointment, he had, it will be remembered, spoken half cynically about the Brydain doom as a thing from which, through his supposed refusal by Etrenne, he had finally become freed. It is possible that it was that cynical, temporary point of view that gave rise to what followed; it is possible that the sole reason is to be sought and found in the stress of his pain. Let the explanation be what it may, the fact remains that the power of the doom which had so powerfully influenced him once as almost to crush him, grew, during his months of trouble and pain in the loss of Etrenne, into an idea of comparative unimportance. The sharp contact with real, tangible pain and trouble relegated the intangible trouble to a subordinate place in Brydain's mind.

Day by day, in his daily work, in his daily struggle to bear his trouble manfully, it had grown fainter and fainter. And when his unexpectedly renewed joy came to him, it simply faded away. This is not saying that he had forgotten it; it was not possible that he should do that; but the meaning had so entirely died out of it for him, that even his marriage, the crisis which was to have been the summit of it, could not re-create its power.

He was no longer in the least afraid of it, and his silence to Tredennis on the eve of his wedding-day regarding it, had been caused simply by the fact that he had actually not thought of it.

Now, when it was all recalled by his wife's question it awoke no dread and no consternation in him whatever; he looked at it all from a totally different point of view—a point of view to which it would have seemed, when he suffered intense mental agony under its dominion, that he never could come.

"It's not much," he began quietly. "A Brydain, somewhere between two and three hundred years ago, was cursed by a woman. Her curse was to bring death, by means of a woman, to twelve Brydains in succession; and the family was to end with the thirteenth, who was also to die through a woman, and that woman his wife. I am the thirteenth," he added, smiling, "and you are my wife! So unless you secrete a

knife about your person, or are filled with concealed longings to strangle me, I fear her reputation for truth will crumble to pieces!" He laughed lightly as he ended. Etrenne's large grey eyes were fixed on his face; she did not at first move them, or speak, but his laughing eyes waited for a response, and she smiled back at him.

"What a horrid old story!" she said, with a little shiver. "Don't you hate it, rather?"

"Hate it?" he said, laughing. "No, I hardly ever think of it now. Once I was so utterly foolish as to dislike it—very much. But now, I suppose advancing age has brought me more sense! And, you see, I'm not in the very least afraid of you!" he ended, with another laugh.

Etrenne made no answer. Brydain looked at her a little anxiously.

"Do you dislike it, sweetheart?" he said. "If so, I wish I had not told you. But it is nothing. Stories like that are as common as possible among our old Scottish families; so common that no one takes any notice of them!"

Etrenne smiled, but rather faintly.

"Traditions are dignified possessions," she said; "don't try to make so light of yours."

"My dear love, I don't make light of anything. It is simply that there is nothing to make light of—nothing. The whole thing, in character and essence, is a story belonging to the grim old times when it took its rise. It hasn't much in common with the nineteenth century, express trains, yellow-backed novels, and—you! Now, has it?" he questioned, smiling at her.

Etrenne smiled again, and this time it was a more reassured smile than the former.

"I don't feel much as if I belonged to it," she said. But she said no more. She took up her novel again, and read it steadily, apparently, until a sudden movement from her husband told her that they were approaching Carfrae station.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

BRYDAIN had sent directions to Mackenzie not to meet them. He had arranged to take a carriage from Carfrae station, thinking that Etrenne would find it more comfortable for the long drive to Brydain than the dog-cart from the Great House. The carriage was waiting for them outside as the train drew up to the platform.

Carfrae was a small place; a bleak, stone-paved little town of about three thousand inhabitants, and its station was very much like it—small and bleak also. It was without any of the flowers and creepers that transform many an ugly little station on an English line into comparative prettiness; nothing broke the bare outline of its gaunt little station-house but straggling ivy, as sombre as the building itself. There were very few people on the platform. The Carfrae neighbourhood was not addicted to journeys.

Brydain got out very quickly, and helped Etenne out with a little air of excitement and conscious pride. He placed her in a corner, sheltered and out of the way, while he went to look for the luggage. But a very pretty, very well-dressed young woman was by no means an every-day sight at the little station; and the few passengers, as they sauntered one by one out of the station, turned more than one curious glance in the direction of that sheltered corner.

When Brydain came back, followed by the one porter, with their trunks, he discovered that the station-master had managed to be professionally engaged in staring at the departing train, precisely in his own and Etenne's way to the entrance. Brydain smiled to himself, and led Etenne towards him with a decided increase of that conscious pride.

"How do you do, Mr. Alexander?" he said cheerily. "I believe you have forgotten me; but if you have not, I am sure you will wish me to introduce you to my wife."

Mr. Alexander was not a man of rapid mental processes.

"Brydain?" he said first, interrogatively. "And your lady," he continued reflectively, as Brydain met the first query with an amused nod. Mr. Alexander was a Glasgow man, who had only been at Carfrae since the opening of the station, some five years earlier. He, therefore, knew nothing of local tradition; and it was to him no extraordinary fact that Brydain should be married, but rather the contrary. He snatched off his bonnet as the full state of the case dawned on him.

"Long life and happiness to you both," he said.

"And you may spare your breath, Sandy Alexander, they'll no hae it."

Behind the station-master stood a small, withered old man, with a basket on his back. This was Thomas Macfarlane,

known as the "Brydain carrier." His occupation consisted in walking backwards and forwards every day between Brydain and Carfrae, to carry parcels and take messages. He was, according to his invariable custom, ending his long day by an evening call at the station—a call which was both professional and sociable.

Brydain, who was engaged in answering the station-master, and keeping his eye on the porter at the same time, neither observed old Thomas nor heard him speak. Mr. Alexander, sensible that he was being interrupted, turned to him with a quick, "Mind your manners, man!" but took no further heed. Etenne alone distinctly heard the words, and, in spite of the strong Scotch accent, she as distinctly understood them. A sort of flash of understanding made her instantly connect them with her husband's words in the train half an hour before. She gave an involuntary shiver, and glanced round her. It seemed to her that she had suddenly become aware that the sun was set, and all the pale blue sky had changed to a lowering grey. She shivered again, and Brydain turned sharply round from his talk with the station-master.

"Cold?" he said anxiously.

She answered in the affirmative, and Brydain, congratulating himself on his foresight in ordering a carriage, hurried their farewell to Mr. Alexander, and was turning to go when he suddenly caught sight of Thomas Macfarlane.

"And how are you, Thomas?" he said. "I did not see you before. You must be tired," he added kindly. "Will you have a lift to Brydain on the box?"

The old man answered with a nod, and at the same moment Etenne caught at her husband's arm; but she did not speak, and Brydain mistook her gesture for another expression of chill, and put her quickly into the carriage, wrapping her tenderly round with the rug when she shivered slightly as Thomas Macfarlane mounted the box with an agility surprising at his years.

The distance between Carfrae and Brydain was six miles, and the road was winding and difficult—on a slow but steady incline uphill for the whole of the way. As the carriage set out upon it, a dark object in the transparent greyness of the autumn evening, an autumn mist rose behind them and rolled towards them, creeping up from the lower ground of Carfrae to the higher upland of Brydain. As it crept slowly on, enveloping hedges, trees, and fields all in its thin whiteness, it was curiously sug-

gestive of a misty shroud, while the rolling on of the carriage seemed at the same time to suggest a fleeing from its all-enveloping veil.

Etrenne was very silent. She had sunk back in her corner with an expression of weariness, and she pulled her cloak round her as if she could not throw off the sense of chill that had struck her in the station. Yet when Brydain asked anxiously if she were still cold, or felt tired, she answered quickly in the negative.

Brydain talked a little, but not much. This home-coming with his bride was exciting him far more than he had expected. The home feeling, partly because he had of his own free choice left his home to live elsewhere, rose up in him now in a strong current of happy emotion. The deep blue eyes first sparkled and then glowed, as he recognised from the carriage window one familiar object after another. Here and there he pointed out to Etrenne some spot of which she had heard him speak, and she raised herself from her corner to look out.

Etrenne was gradually becoming conscious that she was forcibly controlling her thoughts, and that she instinctively avoided anything that tended to break up her hold upon them. She was vaguely aware of an indefinite something, an intangible oppression which she must fight against. She was tired, she told herself; somehow or other she was not herself.

With an instinctive and unconscious grasp at self-reassurance, her thoughts fastened themselves, to counteract this oppression, tenaciously on the welcome they would receive at Brydain. She busied herself in making one mental picture after another of the house to which she was coming and of the reception that was waiting for her there. They were vague enough in detail—Etrenne shrank rather unaccountably from filling in the detail—their outlines, however, were in each case the same in the main. Each and all presented to her an expectant village, a warm, brightly lighted house; above all, a hearty welcome. Over and over again she went through it all, always coming back to dwell eagerly on the last thought. Brydain's people would be glad to see Brydain's wife, she told herself, and she would do her very best to be very nice indeed to them.

Accordingly, when Brydain, breaking a long silence, exclaimed joyously: "Here we are, Etrenne! That is Elspeth's house. We are in the village now!" she raised

herself hurriedly and bent eagerly forward to look out of the window. At that moment the mist, which had gained ground during the last few minutes, reached and touched the carriage, enveloping it also in its dim mysterious whiteness, and rolled on in front.

What Etrenne had expected to see she hardly knew. At the moment of their realisation, the pictures she had made faded from her mind, leaving only a vague expectancy. What she did see was the absolutely empty street of Brydain, perfectly silent, perfectly desolate, perfectly grey and colourless in the all-subduing mist. Every cottage door was tightly shut; not a ray of firelight even streamed out to break the silent gloom.

At that moment the carriage stopped. Etrenne, thoroughly shaken and upset by the contrast of what she saw with what she had hoped to see, clung to Brydain's arm with a little sobbing cry.

"We are not there? This is not it?" she said, in a half-pleading, half-questioning voice.

Brydain looked down at her with a smile on his face, and clasped the hand on his arm tenderly.

"You are tired, my darling," he said. "No, we are not there; we are only stopping for Macfarlane to get down. We shall be there directly, though."

Then, as the old man came to the carriage window, and touched his bonnet in token of gratitude for his drive, he added, with an excited laugh: "Poor old boy! I'm awfully glad we picked him up. I should like to do a good turn to all the world to-night! I'm so happy, sweetheart!"

Etrenne did not answer. She released her hold on his arm, and sank back in her corner, with a white face and eyes that were almost frightened. The grim picture of the silent village had imprinted itself relentlessly upon her consciousness, obliterating all those brightly-coloured pictures she had tried so hard to conjure up.

It was in vain that she told herself that she was tired, that it would be all right in the sunshine to-morrow. There was a chill in it all that seemed to freeze up all her reason. She could fortify herself no more, and that intangible something drew a step nearer to her.

Brydain was all-unconscious of her feelings. To him the Brydain street simply presented its usual aspect. At that hour, on an autumn evening, the people were

always at home at supper. As to their waiting to welcome him and his wife, such an expectation never entered his head. And he gazed in excited silence at each familiar object as the carriage went up the street and along the pine avenue. It rumbled heavily along the stones of the rough track, but every shaking was like a welcome to Brydain; it was all so natural. The carriage stopped at last before the great stone doorway. Brydain sprang out eagerly, and, turning, held out his hand to Etrenne.

Welcome home!" he said cheerily.

At that moment the door, on which Etrenne's eyes had been fixed, as it formed a sombre and forbidding background for his eager figure, opened slowly, and Mackenzie stood upon the threshold, his withered old figure standing out against a dim light in the hall beyond.

"It's yourself, Brydain," he said, "yourself and your married wife."

There was a curious thrill in his cracked and quavering voice, a thrill of something that was almost awe.

The mist was all about them now, separating the husband and wife below from the old man at the top of the steps. It seemed to Etrenne that that intangible something against which she had been fighting all the way, pressed closer and closer upon her. Of herself she could have made no movement towards that dreary doorway, but Brydain put his arm round her, and drew her gently up the steps and within the door.

"My married wife, Mackenzie," he said cheerily; "and she knows you very well, by name at least. Etrenne——" he began, turning to her.

But he was interrupted. With a sudden low cry of irrepresible terror, Etrenne had turned and clutched him convulsively.

"Keith!" she cried, in a low, choked voice, "oh, Keith, look there! What is it?"

She pointed with one trembling finger as she spoke, and Brydain turning hastily in the direction indicated, started also.

At the end of the long passage, dimly lighted and full of strange shadows, there stood a figure that seemed to be little more than one of those shadows materialised. It was a slight, girlish figure, in light, almost white dress, and her face, framed in loose, very light hair, was colourless and fixed—fixed into an expression of unutterable horror, which seemed to centre in the great brown eyes, which were fixed on Etrenne as though they saw not her, but something beyond her. Before Brydain had recovered himself, Mackenzie had turned too, and moved rapidly towards the figure with a low, indignant exclamation.

"Go your ways to your mother, lass," he said, in a low, peremptory tone. And as he emphasized his words with a touch the figure turned without a word or a glance and disappeared.

Then Mackenzie walked back to where Brydain was holding Etrenne, now quite unnerved, trembling from head to foot, with her face pressed against his shoulder, protectively in his arms.

"I'm sair fashed you should have been startled," he said apologetically. "It's just Marjory; she's gone silly, poor lass! Susan Mackenzie should have kept her out of the way."

And then, broken down and wearied out as much by the curious strain of the last hour, as by the reaction from her terror, Etrenne broke suddenly into low, choking sobs.

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PRICE TWOPENCE

MISS LATIMER OF BRYANS.

By ELEANOR C. PRICE.

Author of "Alexia," "Red Towers," "The Little One," etc.

CHAPTER V. MATCH-MAKING.

WHILE the Lady of the Manor of Bryans was hearing her vassal's confessions on life and art, and giving her encouragement, with quaint little bits of good advice, to ambitions she did not in the least realise or understand—for even in that moonlit loneliness Geoffrey was nervously careful that she should guess nothing of his real thoughts—Miss Fanny Latimer and Mr. Otto Nugent were carrying on a much more practical conversation.

He looked after Poppy, as she led away her willing captive towards the orchard, with a slight, interested smile; pulled his moustache and muttered under his breath:

"Lucky painter!"

"Poor man! Just like Poppy," said her aunt. "She wants to comfort him for being refused about the boat. Now tell me, Otto—there are so many things I want to know——"

"First, do you want to know what I think of your niece? I have hardly seen her since she grew up, you know."

"Well, you must admire her, so say what you like."

"I do admire her without compulsion. I think she is extremely handsome—much handsomer than I expected her to be. Almost a beauty."

"Some people think quite," said Miss Latimer.

"No doubt. The unfortunate painter, for instance."

"He is nobody," she said, with a little impatience. "Don't say that kind of thing please; it irritates me."

"But why not, dear Miss Latimer? He is an educated human being, and not a bad-looking fellow, and evidently rather a favourite. I really don't feel quite safe in describing him as nobody."

"He is nobody, Otto. Don't tease me. He is the younger son of a farmer at Sutton Bryans. His grandfather—I don't say his father, for these people think so much of themselves now—his grandfather would have touched his hat to any Latimer he met in the road. Poppy is nice to him because of all that. I hope the man has too much sense to misunderstand her."

"Very possibly. All you say is true and wise. But we live at the end of the nineteenth century, and the world is very much 'bouleversé,' and some people think that if a man has talent, or genius, or whatever he likes to call it, there need be no limit to his ambition. I quite understand the fair Porphyria's motive. She is not difficult to read. But she might be difficult to manage, in case she found out, as she probably will, the conquest she has made. That is a certainty, whether the man comes from Bryans or from New York. This afternoon, when I saw him first, I wondered what was the matter with him. He was sitting by the river with his face buried in his hands. When I spoke to him, he blushed like a girl. Poor chap, I dare say he does understand Miss Porphyria, and is none the happier for it. But she ought not, you know—no, she ought not to go away for long walks with him in the moonlight. It's not quite the thing for her, and cruel kindness to him, even if he is nobody."

Miss Latimer laughed, and then sighed.

"I can't tell her so."

"That I understand." He waited a moment, and went on very gravely: "You must forgive my plain speaking. I hope I don't presume too much on the friendship; but I feel very deeply interested."

Miss Latimer glanced at him, but without satisfaction, for not only was Otto Nugent's face at no time easily read, but he had just leant back into the shadow.

"Then I suppose," she said, "your mother has told you the fancy—the idea——"

"She took me a little way into her confidence. In fact, we held a family council on the subject—she, Alice, and I. I don't think they would have admitted me, you know, if they could have helped it. Ladies always think that men are so awkward—that a man behaves like a large stone in the midst of delicate machinery. But as we had to alter all our plans to come here, it was necessary, don't you see, to make me understand the necessity. Of course I understood my mother's pleasure in meeting you; but then I knew that she could meet you just as well in England, a little later, and I had arranged a rather different tour, because Herzheim is not a place I care for much. But when I was shown that with regard to Arthur—well, it was a case of now or never—I saw the reasonableness. My mother told me the very kind things you had said about him—and in short, of course, I could not stand in the way of such a possibility. They found me quite manageable, and anything but a stumbling-stone."

"I see," said Miss Latimer. "Well, I had no wish to spoil your tour, but it is some time now since the idea came into my head, and when your mother mentioned that Arthur was going back to India this autumn, I thought that if he and Poppy were to meet, it was a case, as you say, of now or never. Some people, I dare say, might call me a worldly old match-maker——"

"Not old certainly," said Otto, in his deliberate tones. Miss Latimer laughed. "Nor worldly," he went on. "Very much the contrary of worldly. So much so, that it seems to me the one objection of your plan. Every advantage, you see, is on your side. Arthur is a pleasing boy, with nice looks and a nice temper. There he ends, as far as I know him. To speak vulgarly, Miss Porphyria Latimer might

look a great deal higher. She might make a match as magnificent as her name."

"She might, but she never will," said Fanny Latimer with a faint sigh, which brought a corresponding faint smile to her companion's lips. "I should not feel so driven to make plans for Poppy, if she was like other girls. But you see I never feel sure of her. She takes people up in such an extraordinary way. She interests herself in people, no matter who they are, and seems quite to forget her own position. Now you or I would never find ourselves the least intimate with a person like this young Thorne, for instance. And look at Poppy!"

"But just now, when I expressed something of the sort, you told me there was nothing to be frightened at."

"So I did; yes, I meant it. She is nice to him, I really think, simply and solely because he comes from Bryans and paints badly. Oh no! He is perfectly safe, perfectly. But I mean that there you see Poppy's character. She might take a serious fancy to a person of that sort. There is not a scrap of worldliness about her. Worldliness! I might say self-respect—and yet that is not the right word either. Her relations must take pains, must arrange her life for her as best they can. I feel it more and more every day. And it seems to me that just a happy, simple marriage to somebody we all know—somebody who is sweet-tempered, and sensible, and charming, like dear Arthur, who will just influence her nicely and let her go her own way, is the thing I must aim at for Poppy. I want her to be happy. I think myself that happiness matters much more than money or titles. Poppy has money enough. If she marries a gentleman, and a good man, I shall be quite contented. There, Otto! I might have been talking to your mother. Please take that as a compliment."

She ended with a nervous little laugh.

"I do," said Otto. After a minute's silence, he went on: "Certainly no one could dare to call you worldly. I can't tell you how right and wise I think you. But your ideas are not English, you know."

"Indeed, they are, thoroughly English. What do you mean? Foreigners think of nothing but money. They arrange, of course, but it is all a matter of fortune. They don't study characters."

"I beg your pardon; they do. Alice knows a very charming French girl, with-

out much fortune, whose relations have refused two excellent matches for her because the men's characters did not quite please them."

"Oh, well, but of course—anything serious——"

"There was nothing serious. One was ill-tempered, the other was miserly. Now that girl, if she had had the chance, and if she had been English—French girls have more sense—would probably have fallen in love with one of those men, and would have been a miserable woman."

"She might have fallen in love with the ill-tempered one. Never with the miser."

Otto laughed.

"Well, after all, this little plot of ours is very English. We are only bringing our young people together, with a little gentle encouragement to fall in love. My mother has said nothing to Arthur, beyond the barest hint, and as to Miss Porphyria——"

"Heaven forbid! Poppy must know nothing. The faintest suspicion will ruin all."

"I understand. Well, Arthur will have his chance, a very fine chance. And I think—I hope——"

"Anyhow, he must admire Poppy," said Miss Latimer in a low voice.

"He cannot fail to do that," said Otto.

In his own mind, at the same time, he was not at all sure that his brother would be attracted by this stately young heiress. Too absolutely different, he thought. It was not impossible, however, that Porphyria might condescend from her heights to a handsome, amiable young man, if he played his cards well; and this his elder brother was quite determined that he should do.

It seemed to him that Miss Latimer measured her niece extremely well. Arthur, with an easy temper and no disagreeable vices, was just the sort of man to be Squire of Bryans, even if he did, as he probably would, give way to his wife in everything. And if the two did not fall madly in love with each other—somehow he could not fancy that they would—that seemed to Otto no reason why such an excellent match should not come off all the same. He had himself lost his heart to a clever, penniless girl; had married for love and never regretted it. It was a perfect marriage and a real friendship. Alice satisfied his whole nature; even that calculating part of him, which would not of itself have consented to marry her,

rejoiced in being conquered. No surprise at his own unworldliness ever troubled Otto's mind, though he was a man who liked money and knew how to spend it, and who knew very well that life would have been made much easier by a different sort of marriage. He was totally convinced that Alice was the only woman in the world he could have married, and as she and money were not to be had together, money had to go to the wall.

But Arthur's affairs could not at all be arranged in that summary fashion. A man with wits, like Otto, might please himself; but Arthur must marry a rich wife or not marry at all. He had been crammed and pushed into the army somehow, though he was neither clever nor industrious; but that seemed a failure. He did not really care for his profession. India did not suit him; he had come home ill, and was now approaching the end of a long sick leave. If only this benevolent scheme of Miss Latimer's should come to anything, it might be the saving of Arthur. The more the plan was considered the better it seemed. No obstacle must be allowed to rise on Arthur's side. Otto Nugent could be thoroughly hard and worldly for his brother in these matters, whatever he might have been for himself.

At present, having a low opinion of women—except Alice—and not possessing even Miss Latimer's rather tremulous faith in her niece, it struck Otto strongly that the heiress and the painter had been left to themselves quite long enough. His position was a little difficult, for he had no right to interfere, and this he saw clearly enough. But he did not quite like the recollection of that painter's eyes when he came up with Poppy from the garden in the moonlight. It was a recollection that worried him, especially after the clear explanation he had had with Miss Latimer. He thought she was foolish and neglected her charge. He got up, strolled up and down aimlessly once or twice, stifled a yawn, stared at his own shadow on the wall.

"You are tired, Otto. Don't let me keep you here," said Miss Latimer. "I'll wait for Poppy; she is sure to come back soon."

Otto looked at his watch.

"Ten o'clock," he said. "A little late for her, isn't it? I suppose they—they haven't gone down to the lake, after all. Is that possible, do you think?"

"Gone out in a boat, do you mean?"

"Well, is that possible?"

"Do you really think so?"

"Indeed I don't know."

"But I do," said Miss Latimer, and though she laughed she was angry with him.

Her love for Poppy was touched in a sensitive place. She thought, "What a prig he is!" and hoped that Arthur would never be like him. For Miss Fanny Latimer, though she had lived much among inferior natures, had the germs of those beautiful qualities that flowered in Poppy.

"Go in, Otto," she said, with a playful wave of her hand. "You are asleep already; you don't know one person from another. Do you want more explanations? Well—I needn't say it—but if Poppy had decided to go out on the lake, she would have come back to tell me so."

Otto Nugent, as he stood looking at her, put up his hand to hide a smile. He was not asleep at all, and saw that the little lady was angry.

"Silly old woman!" he thought. "Blind and sentimental. Of course, whatever the girl chooses to do is right in her eyes. She spoils her down to the ground. She would have no business to cry out if all this moonlight rubbish were to end in an elopement with the painter."

With these thoughts came a strong and disinterested desire to kick that painter out of Herzheim. This would be an effectual way of playing Arthur's game for him, except that it might prejudice Poppy in a wrong direction.

"In the name of goodness, why don't they come—why don't they arrive?" Otto almost muttered, thinking of his family. "With these useless delays and the utter foolishness of these two women, everything will go wrong."

Miss Latimer saw and heard nothing of these impatiences. To her defence of Poppy he answered with perfect meekness:

"Forgive me. I didn't mean anything, really, except selfishness. You forget how little I have seen of her yet. And of course I don't imagine that she enjoys talking to that fellow. It is entirely kindness on her part, I quite see; but he ought not to take advantage of her kindness. Are you too tired to walk down the orchard a little way? We might meet them."

If Geoffrey had admired and worshipped

his questioner less, the examination he went through that evening would have puzzled him a good deal more. He had to describe his whole art life; how, and where, and how long he had studied, the methods of his masters, his own ideas, and wishes, and aims. Poppy had read a good deal of art criticism, and had picked up certain terms, as people do, without knowing anything of art. She frankly confessed that she knew nothing, but she was anxious, it seemed, to discover all that her friend knew. She listened to him with interest, and was evidently comparing all that he said with things prearranged in her own mind. In truth, there seemed reason to be pleased and satisfied with all he told her. His notions sounded so good that she almost began to feel more hopeful for him.

Only—here was the difficulty and the puzzle—why was there such a distance between his talk and his work? Why, with all this knowledge about atmosphere, about local colour and "good stuff," and the rest of the technical jargon, had he produced those hard, glaring, laboured drawings, those metallic mountains wrapped in clouds of cotton-wool, those trees like heavy, confused blots in a landscape that might have been painted on china? His way of seeing things, of course. Every artist must have his own way, Poppy reminded herself. Ten people may look at a sunset, and each see it differently. But with the remembrance of those Swiss sketches before her eyes, the sad conviction came back and weighed upon her in spite of argument:

"He is not an artist; he never will be an artist. It is not my ignorance; it is truth. It is his own way of seeing, of course; but not a real painter's way. He will never get on, never; but who can tell him so? Certainly not a person who knows nothing. And yet what a waste of a man's life! How useful he might be in some other profession, so clever and good as he is, poor fellow! As it is, he will have nothing but disappointment; and he will always go on believing in himself, and blame other people for what is himself. He won't even believe experience. What can be sadder than such a life, spent in trying to do what he can't, what he never can do! Are there many such lives, I wonder?"

Poppy's eyes and mouth grew so sad as she listened to Geoffrey, and thought her own thoughts about it all, that presently,

by slow degrees, the dreamy joy with which he watched her and answered her, talking his best, changed into a kind of uneasiness, a faint, puzzled anxiety. Even the touch of her questions, as soft as that of her fingers, began to hurt a little in time, and yet Poppy had never forgotten for a moment that she might be playing on a very sensitive instrument.

At last he said to her—he was sitting on the bench near her now :

"When you were looking at the mountains from my window, do you remember what you said ?"

As he spoke, he leaned a little back into his own corner ; his face flushed, and his heart was beating violently. It must not be possible for her to see the one or hear the other.

"No ; what did I say ?" said Poppy, in her sweet, grave voice.

"I thought you were perfectly right, and it was just like you to say it. You said : 'Somehow I find more poetry in things when I don't know too much about them.'"

"Yes," she said, not understanding him. "I think I do."

"But that is rather bad for me to remember," he said, very low, "when you have been making me tell you my history in this minute way."

Poppy smiled, and coloured a little too.

"When you examine a thing," Geoffrey went on, "it does not mean that it interests you. Rather the contrary."

"No," she said, a little eagerly. "You don't understand me. I was talking about poetry—fancy, imagination, something that can never be quite real. Mountains are that to me—like pictures in the clouds or in the fire. Real life, human life, is quite a different thing. One cannot know too much about that, I think—about people's thoughts and work. There is nothing so interesting." She laughed out as she went on. "You cannot have thought that it was a want of interest in you that made me ask all those impertinent questions."

"Only a want of poetical interest," said Geoffrey.

"Well, you are alive, you are real ; you are not far off, like the mountains."

"No ; I am an easy study, with no mysterious distances. Nothing to be imagined about me," he said ; and though he was almost laughing too, there was such an oddly sad ring in the voice

which talked this nonsense that Poppy felt that she had somehow, with all her good intentions, done something wrong.

Her pity for him was real and deep ; but at that moment, plainly, there was nothing to be done but to finish the talk as kindly as possible.

"You must be a subject of imagination to your own people, if you never go home," she said. "Why don't you go to Sutton Bryans this autumn, and paint some beech-woods ?"

He had no time to answer, and they both rose to their feet. Two shadows, Miss Latimer and Mr. Otto Nugent, were moving towards them down the broad, white path.

FROM SUNSET TILL DAWN.

THE solitude of a great city from about the second hour after midnight till the grey dawn comes again, making the mysterious shadows less dark, and bringing back the first throbbings of renewed life, inspires one with a feeling of strange awe. Well did Wordsworth realise this when he stood on Westminster Bridge in the calm dawn of that September day in 1803 :

Ne'er saw I, never felt, a calm so deep !
The river glideth at his own sweet will ;
Dear God ! the very houses are asleep,
And all that mighty heart is lying still !

Against this solitude, that which reigns amidst the lonely hills is as nothing. The one inspires the feeling of lonely isolation in the midst of those slumbering, unheeding millions, whilst the other bestows the companionship of Nature in a thousand varied forms. Nowhere within the scope of our poetic literature has this dominating spirit of Nature been better described than in Wordsworth's lines :

The sounding cataract
Haunted me like a passion ; the tall rock,
The mountain, and the deep and gloomy wood,
Their colours and their forms were then to me
An appetite ; a feeling and a love
That had no need of a remoter charm
By thoughts supplied, nor any interest
Unborrowed from the eye.

There are many who imagine that, after nightfall, Nature loses all personality and life ; that night is but another name for the cold gloom of temporary effacement ; and that the earth, after sunset, is like some vast theatre of which the footlights have all been extinguished, the curtain has fallen on the final act of the play, and the players have all gone wearily home to

forgetfulness and repose. As a matter of fact, it is not so. All Nature does not go to sleep when the curtain of night is drawn across the heavens, nor are the doors of her treasure-chambers closed against the reverent foot or inquiring eye. During all the night Nature has a subtle life and a mysterious music of her own. Every sound is accentuated, or underscored, as it were—the drone of the dragon-fly, the hum of the belated bee, the blithe chirrup of the grasshopper, and the twitter of the birds in bush and tree. We seem to be nearer the supernatural, too, both in feeling and interpretation.

A nocturnal ramble by meadow, river, and hill, is not a common incident in human experience, but it has in it elements which are at once romantic and picturesque, nor is it without its reward. The matter-of-fact world may smile, and tell us that night is a strange season in which to go abroad over hill and dale in search of knowledge and pleasure. We accept its opinion with good-natured equanimity, and pursue our way all the same, on the principle that we know well what we are about.

How still lies the sleeping village! The merry chimes of the blacksmith's anvil are hushed, and his forge fire restfully slumbers till a new day; the old mill-wheel, coated with green, velvety ooze, stands silent in the deep night. Yonder, in the east, is the moon, about twenty degrees above the horizon. At present it is only a wan half disc; but it will become luminous as it ascends. Here are the grand, picturesque ruins of Calder Towers, fit spot whence to start on our nocturnal ramble. Listen to the "tu-whoo" of the grey owl in some recess of that old ivy-wreathed tower. Hark! there is the call again—a strangely mingled cry, assuredly belonging to the night; flute-like, too, and not altogether weird. It has always seemed to us to be wronging Nature, and to be a libel on the bird himself, to insist that the owl's vocation on this planet of ours is to pose as an anchorite, or a bird of evil omen and dolorous tidings. It is true that both he and the raven have a somewhat shady reputation in this respect, but they can take consoling comfort in the fact that they are not the only individuals so treated by a world that has maligned its greatest benefactors and best friends, from Socrates downwards. It is unfair to him that the charge of bringing calamity to mortals should be laid at his door. He has nothing to do

with the control of Fate. Fate herself is often faithless, and has many an idle jest. He is a mighty hunter, if you will, and has a strange, eerie cry, but his voice is his own, and, in all likelihood, to the ear of his lady-love is sweeter than the nightingale's song—it certainly has not interfered with his wooing. And, if he should hunt by night, it is a household necessity, and he has the consoling thought that he is not interfering with his feathered neighbours who forage by day. He has, moreover, one supreme virtue—all his cares and interests are centred in his spouse and the little ones—and this is more than can be said of many a featherless biped.

Now we are deep in the meadow that leads to the river-side. There is no silence nor rest in these waters day or night. The moon is still ascending the sky, but, being on the wane, its light is wan and cold. The river shimmers, however, in its pale beams, and we can trace, in far-off silvery patches, the windings of the waters by the tall seggans and overhanging alders that fringe the banks. But hark! there is a dull splash—a night moth has been sucked into the jaws of some wary trout. Yonder is a heron, too, standing among the bents which bend in the night breeze. He may have been for hours on that lonely vigil, watching for his prey; but, save for the wind ruffling his feathers at intervals, he is silent and motionless as if carved in stone.

Right over our heads, and swift as an arrow, passes the humming snipe, whilst, circling around us, with querulous, plaintive cry, hovers the anxious and affrighted lapwing, seeking by every artifice in her power to allure us from her young brood. How lightly do the creatures of the fields and woods sleep! The faintest footstep brings the drowsy, responsive twitter or call from fir-wood, beech grove, or river-bank. There is no bird, however, more easily awoken than the lapwing, and we have often found our footsteps disturb her a long way off. When suddenly aroused she flies with quick, jerky flight around the intruder, at the same time uttering cries of plaintive appeal. Little wonder, therefore, that the poacher looks upon the bird with extreme disfavour, as the game-keeper has learned to associate his cry with the movements of that nefarious trespasser.

Hark! a little sedge-warbler has burst into song over yonder, on the opposite

bank of the stream—a song sweet and clear as the notes of a Calabrian flute. The bird is to a certainty deep in the heart of the bushes, surrounded by an impervious screen of boughs, as he is wondrously shy, and can seldom be seen unless from a distance and with the aid of a strong glass. He is yonder, however, jubilant as the midnight reveller in his rollicking, heedless song. Often on a midsummer night—when the great belt of grey light never left the horizon all the night through, but crept from the west along the northern horizon till it merged in the eastern dawn—have we heard him, in true ventriloquial fashion, mimic the various harmonies of the noonday grove. He is really the Britisha mocking-bird, facile princeps; even the wood-thrush, with all his versatility, cannot approach him.

We have yet a long stretch to overtake by hillside, river-bank, and dark fir-wood, solemn and undefined in the distance, and ere we return to the village the dawn will be upon us. Listen to that sharp, flute-like, plaintive cry overhead. It is the call of the curlew, who is hurrying off to his feeding-ground by marshy meadow or mountain tarn. Nor is he the only bird on the wing just now—that strange-looking speck, like a flock of whiteness, is the grey owl flitting around us silent as the creature of a dream. Most birds signal their course either with whirr or flap of wing, but no sound accompanies the owl's phantom flight.

Yonder, at last, is the faintest indication of the dawn in the form of a cold, grey streak in the east. Slowly it advances, and we see that the first stage of the struggle for the mastery between darkness and light has been entered upon. The sky above, however, is yet dark and star-gemmed. The half-moon is slowly sailing up, and the Pleiades are shining overhead in their throbbing pulsations of life and light, whilst Orion is setting behind the western hills which are dimly looming yonder out of the solemn darkness. In the utter stillness which lies around in bank, and field, and tree, we feel the mystic influence of

This holy time, quiet as a nun
Breathless with adoration.

Yonder, too, the morning star, large and lustrous, hangs above the old church tower like a lamp of heaven hung o'er a holy shrine. Higher still the light spreads up from the distant east, changing from its primal grey colour to a dark blue, with

here and there filmy flecks of a dusky yellow.

Now comes the ruddy glow deep down amidst the flecks of cloud that lie along the rim of the eastern horizon. These flecks are motionless as anchored ships. Ruddier they become, and seem to throb or pulsate, as if by some unseen influence they were newly gifted with a life of transcendent glory. Gradually the setting of ethereal blue, in which they are so beautifully placed, becomes light green in tint, and the cloudy bars assume the colour of glowing amber.

But as this goes on the earth is awaking. With the first streak of dawn there comes over the land a strange, cold sigh, ruffling the surface of the still pools and passing with a "sis—ah" amongst the beeches and firs. It is the signal that Nature is astir again, and has drawn her first fresh breath ere entering on another dial's round of the circling sun. Fresh and gladsome comes that breeze as blithely it blows

Reveillée to the breaking morn.

Have you ever observed closely the gradual awaking of animal life at the first indications of dawn? From the time when spring is advanced, and all the summer through, first of all comes the faint twitter of the swallows, informing us that they have got their eyes opened, and are pluming their feathers and taking a breath of fresh air, ere contemplating their foraging expeditions for themselves and their young brood. Half an hour later the first chirruping of the thrush is heard from the bushes at the corner of the meadow; while, just as the sun is throwing up his shafts into the heart of the clouds that skirt the horizon, and before his burnished disc comes in sight, the lark soars to his exultant notes, higher and higher, shaking down in one unceasing stream his melodious strains upon the awakened earth.

The sky in the east, yonder, has now a deep blue colour, and forms a fine contrast to the green hills in the comparative foreground. A cool breeze comes up now from the south, bringing with it white clouds sailing at an immense height, with openings between, like azure lakes, or aerial seas compassed by low-lying banks of slumbering vapour. These, if you closely watch them, you will find to slowly dissolve: fragments break away from them just as the edges of Polar glaciers slip into the sea from the ice-cliff; only, the magician's hand

that sunders the fleecy rims from the snow-white body of the cloud is alike silent and unseen. Watch the mystery of the tiny sundered patch. Onward it drifts from the solid white mass, like a strayed lamb from the flock. Still on it goes, exhaling itself in the infinite, every moment getting thinner and more translucent, its margin stretching out into an uneven fringe, until it fades away in the finest silken threads, and is lost in the illimitable blue. Whilst this transformation is going on in the boundless arena above, what a mysterious and fascinating charm there is in all these changes! The delicate hues, the contrast of the fleecy white with the deepest blue, the ever-changing forms, the light shining through the gauzy texture, and their gentle, dreamy motion, lend these clouds an exquisite beauty and grace which from the memory can never fade away. There is in them, both in form and motion, the most exquisite poetry. We never see them in their calm, stately drifting through the blue sky, without thinking of the charming and peaceful lines of Shelley:

Underneath the young grey dawn,
A multitude of dense, white fleecy clouds
Were wandering in thick folds along the mountains,
Shepherded by the slow, unwilling wind.

But the blue smoke is curling from the cottage roofs in the village down yonder, and we must take our way homewards. As we descend to the village we have the consciousness that we have been abroad to some purpose. And no one can blame us if, in some calm retrospect of this walk, in after days, there should come upon our lips the lines:

Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,
But to be young was very heaven!

THE COCO DE MER.

THERE should be great rejoicing among the vegetable world at Kew; especially should the Palm House be agitated by a joyous crepitation, for a prince royal of all the palms—it may be a princess, but as there is no Salic law in the case that does not signify—has been brought into the world under the skilful management of the staff of the Royal Gardens. The young "Coco de Mer" has not yet taken its place among the tall palms of the great house. Its royal nursery is at present in the warm and congenial atmosphere of the house which contains the tank of the Victoria Regia. There, just above the level of the

water, is perched the big flower-pot that contains the vigorously shooting young plant; and on the top of what seems to be a drain-pipe set on end reposes, in close proximity, the mother nut—a double nut of great size—which still continues in a certain measure to nourish her young offspring.

The plant is said to be the first that has ever been raised in Europe, and the mode of its germination is so peculiar and interesting as to attract a good deal of attention from even casual and unscientific visitors. Frequenters of the Gardens pay regular visits to enquire after the health and progress of the little stranger; and the holiday-makers gather round it and peruse the card which contains a short account of its lineage and antecedents.

A certain flavour of mystery and romance attaches to this singular palm, of which the nut was known and treasured long before the tree itself that bore it had been identified. For the latter is found only on two small islands in the Indian Ocean belonging to the Seychelles group, which, although known to navigators from the date of Vasco di Gama's discovery of a route to India by way of the Cape, were left to themselves till 1743, when the French Governor of the Mauritius annexed them to his sovereign's dominions.

French botanists and explorers were not long in identifying the tree which produced the wonderful nuts, and hastened to impart their knowledge to the scientific world, in this heedless way missing a fine opportunity of clearing something like a fortune in the nut trade, for, up to the time of this discovery, the double nut was highly prized, and as much as four hundred pounds had been given for a single specimen. But it can be imagined what a "bear market" there was in double cocos when it was whispered abroad that this precious nut was "as plenty as blackberries" in two islands in the Indian seas.

Before that discovery the only specimens known of the double nut had been floated up by the sea on the coasts of the Indies or of the islands adjacent, thousands of miles distant from its place of origin. When picked up on the seashore—not a common object by any means, but a treasure of the greatest rarity—it did not necessarily bring good fortune to its finder. On the Maldive Islands it was death to possess it, as when found it should be taken at once to the King. It was the inside of the nut that His Majesty princi-

pally valued, for it was believed to be an unfailing antidote against all poisons. The shells the King would bestow on his favourites. They take a fine polish, especially when hardened and condensed by a voyage on their own account across the Indian Ocean; and thus, beautifully carved and embossed, they make handsome drinking-cups, with enough of their original virtue about them to give warning of any peculiarly poisonous brew that may be poured into them.

The Indians also attached great medicinal value to the coco de mer, which seems originally to have received its name from the Portuguese, as the first to open trade and form settlements on the coast of India. A Dutch naturalist speaks of the nut as "a wonderful miracle of nature, the most rare of marine productions, a fruit growing itself in the sea whose tree has hitherto been concealed from the eye of man."

But, according to the Malays, the tree had actually been seen: a great palm, growing upwards from the bed of the sea, and visible at a great depth through the translucent waves; but when any one attempted to reach the tree by diving, it vanished away and was no more seen. Another account has it that those who dived for it were no more seen, for, according to the negro magicians, who professed to know something of the secret of its origin, this wonderful tree, in its submarine branches, harboured an enormous griffin, which nightly came to shore and, seizing elephants and tigers, carried them off to its nest and devoured them, and not satisfied with such common fare, lay in wait for ships, which the huge beast would drag towards it with its long arms and then devour the luckless mariners at its leisure.

With such pleasant traditions attached to it, and encompassed by such a delightful mystery, it seems almost a pity that the light of common day should have been let in upon the matter by the discovery of the nut as a mere terrestrial product. Yet many curious speculations are excited by the existence of such a specialised variety of the palm upon two solitary islands only, thousands of miles away from any great mass of land. If the product itself is neither so rich and rare as it was once supposed to be, yet the wonder is all the greater as to how it got there, perched, that is, upon a rocky summit surrounded by the lone ocean. The islands on which grows the coco de mer, the scientific

name of which is *Lodoicea Sychellarum*—in the days of ignorance it was called *Cocos Maldavica*, from the specimens of its fruit being found chiefly on the Maldives—are not coralline islands, like so many in the Indian and Pacific seas, but veritable granitic peaks, the last remains, perhaps, of some submerged continent on which have taken refuge a few select remnants of the fauna and flora of a more primitive world.

In political geography, the Seychelles are grouped with the Mauritius, and consequently, when the British acquired the latter, the Seychelles came within the bargain conferred by the Treaty of Vienna, and with them we acquired the practical monopoly of the coco de mer. An English observer soon after the cession of the islands, writes with enthusiasm of the sight of these palms "growing in thousands, old and young," the middle-aged flourishing, the old decaying, and the young growing up to replace them, just like some human family, and he adds: "It is difficult not to look upon them as animated objects."

The same feeling arises when regarding the specimen at Kew Gardens. There seems an almost animal vitality about the plant, and the mode in which it is connected with the parent nut, and absorbs nutriment therefrom, bears a strong analogy to arrangements in animal life. A striking distinction between the sexes tends to aid the illusion, if illusion it be. The male tree is tall and stately, rising often to a height of a hundred feet, and producing huge spathes which contain the fertilising element. The female is generally twenty or thirty feet less in height, but with a more spreading plumage of fronds, and will produce, in suitable conditions, perhaps a hundred nuts in a year; and she comes to bear fruit in her ninth year, and often earlier, and the days of her years range closely with the scriptural span allotted to mankind.

Yet the value of the coco de mer to the dwellers in its native isles is not so much for the double nut, which, whatever its medicinal value, is not good eating, nor is the oil extracted from it equal to that of the ordinary cocoa-nut. But the grand leafage of the palm forms the ridging of the native huts—a hundred leaves will make a whole house, and a single leaf makes a hen-coop, as may be seen in the drawings of the late Miss Marianne North at her gallery in the Gardens. The down

of the young foliage forms good stuffing for pillows, mattresses, etc., and the leaf-ribs are made into baskets and brooms—to such humble uses has the royal family of palms descended in its latter days.

As to whether our English specimen will turn out a boy or a girl, it is as yet too early to speak with certainty. And the prospects of rearing the interesting visitor are not to be spoken of with confidence. But there is no harm in wishing that our coco de mer may grow to a hundred feet high, and live for a hundred years.

SOME DUKES OF YORK.

THE revival of a title which for the past five centuries and longer has been heard of more or less in the stirring epochs of English history, is an event which raises a certain interest in other Dukes of York, most of whom are lineally connected with the Prince who is the latest representative of the famous house of York. On the whole the title is one that has rung pleasantly in the ears of the Englishmen of succeeding generations. Its holders have generally been popular favourites, and distinguished by courage and courtesy; and while they have had their fair share of vicissitudes and misfortunes, nothing that is ill-omened or unlucky can be held to attach itself to the White Rose of York.

For the first Duke of York we need go no further back than the reign of Edward the Third. There were no English Dukes, indeed, before that reign. The title was one that seemed to belong to the Holy Roman Empire, and it was as vicar of the Empire that Edward probably felt himself empowered to create dukedoms for his numerous progeny of sons. The fifth of these was Edmund of Langley, created Duke of York, who lived to see his nephew Richard deposed, and who is chiefly noteworthy to us as calling so persistently for his boots in Shakespeare's chronicle play of "King Richard the Second." That he can't get his boots owing to his wife's machinations saves the life of his son Edward, who is thus enabled to gain the start in a race for Windsor, and to reach the presence of the new King and obtain his pardon before his father arrives to denounce him as a conspirator.

When good old York shuffles off this mortal coil, and has no more need for his boots, his son Edward steps into them,

and becoming Duke of York, serves the House of Lancaster faithfully; and having no progeny that one hears of, is not an object of much suspicion to his sovereign, and dies in his service, leading the vanguard of the little English army at Agincourt. But it is otherwise with his brother Richard, Earl of Cambridge, who marries Ann Mortimer, the heiress of Lionel, Duke of Clarence, the third son of King Edward the Third, and thus unites two potent lines of succession. Thus when Henry the Fifth was about to depart for the French wars, he thought it best to make all safe at home by beheading my lord of Cambridge, who left a son, Richard, however, not yet old enough to be beheaded. And when Richard came to a beheadable age, luckily for him a child King was upon the throne. Then we have the episode, as Shakespeare and the chroniclers give it, of the quarrel between Richard and Somerset in the Temple Gardens, and of the challenge of the former to those who favoured his cause:

From off this briar pluck a white rose with me.

Then as a result of the quarrel between Gloucester and the Cardinal, Beaufort, and their temporary reconciliation, Holinshed tells us how "the King for joy caused a solemn feast to be made on Whitsunday: on which daie he created Richard Plantagenet sonne and heire to the earl of Cambridge (whom his father at Southampton had put to death as before ye have heard) duke of York not foreseeing that this preferment should be his destruction." Yet, as the King was only seven years old at the time, he is hardly to be blamed for his want of forethought and penetration.

The new Duke of York was a brave and stirring Prince, and finding the crown almost derelict, he went for it with great skill and determination, backed by the general good wishes of the nation. That he was eventually defeated at Wakefield by Queen Margaret, and speedily executed—

Off with his head, and set it on York gates;
So York may overlook the town of York.

was an unfortunate accident due to Richard's reckless courage; but his son Edward, who may be reckoned as the fourth Duke of York, one of the best captains of the age, soon redressed the balance, and avenged his father's death. About Edward's son, another Richard, Duke of York, there still hangs the romance of a doubtful unknown fate. Whether he and his brother, the

titular Edward the Fifth, were really murdered in the Tower, and, if so, by whose authority, is still, and ever likely to be, a question about which different opinions may be held.

The next Duke of York is unfamiliar as such; we know him better as the burly, butcher-like Prince, the bluff King Harry of the popular legend. But he was created Duke of York in his youth, when his elder brother Arthur was alive. Some time elapsed before another Duke appeared on the scene, and then in 1604-5, in the month of January, came King James having recently come to the throne, there is a grand ceremonial at Whitehall, when Charles, Duke of Albany in the peerage of Scotland, a child some four years old, takes the Bath with other young Companions of the Order, and probably hollered lustily during the process, and on the following day was created Duke of York. Noble Earls bore respectively the robes of estate, the golden rod, the cap of state, and it took three of them to bear the little Duke himself, who was a cantankerous child by all accounts, and who, perhaps, was allowed to suck the golden rod to keep him quiet. Happy for him if he had lived and died Duke of York, for Charles would have made an excellent nobleman, and would have been spared the miseries of his unhappy reign.

Of Charles's son, James, we seem to know a good deal more as Duke of York. First we have the little Duke of York a boy prisoner in St. James's Palace, and helped out of the window by Sir John Denham, the poet of "Cooper's Hill," with whom he escapes to France. Less happily in after years, restored to greatness, the same Duke employs himself in carrying off the elderly poet's young and pretty wife, a matter which ended tragically enough for her, as she died soon after, and Denham was suspected of having poisoned her.

When in the company of Samuel Pepys we constantly meet with the Duke of York, for whom, as Lord High Admiral, the worthy Clerk of the Acts has the greatest respect, although he may not rate his administrative talents very highly. Nor can the Duke be reckoned much of a naval commander, for though he was in some big sea fights, he seems to have been fairly anxious to get out of them again. Yet James was respectable enough as Duke of York, and it was only when he came to be King of

England that he made a conspicuous failure in affairs.

With the downfall of the Stuarts there comes a kind of schism in the line of Dukes of York. Actually, for some time there were two: a Stuart Duke of York, Henry Benedict, a Roman Cardinal, and son of him whom our forefathers called the old Pretender; and Edward Augustus, of the house of Guelph, son of Prince Fred, and a younger brother of the good monarch, Farmer George. Of this Duke of York not much is known. We may catch a glimpse of him at Olieveden, cramming Greek with some worthy D.D., and for encouragement taken over to see the Eton boys, also cramming Greek, but with faculties sharpened by the knowledge of the birch-rod suspended over them, as it were, by a single hair. Later on we may find our Royal Duke making the grand tour, and received with due distinction at the little Courts and big ones by the Royalties, the Grand Dukes and small Princes who swarmed in that pre-revolutionary age; and he is described by a courtly chronicler of that tour as "an amiable Prince, the just object of the general adoration" of the British people. But the Duke died in the prime of life, and for a time the Cardinal at Rome had the monopoly of the title. But he does not seem to have been a bigoted Jacobite, this one, and there were exchanges of civilities between the Cardinals and the Guelphs, and at last it is said that the former, having suffered losses, accepted a pension at the hands of George the Third.

There is a weak kind of analogy between the position of the first creator of Duke and of George the Third, inasmuch as both of them had large families to provide with appanages and titles. A portrait by West is still in existence of good Queen Charlotte, George's amiable consort, a picture once on show in the state apartments of Windsor Castle, "the back ground embellished," says a contemporary description, "with a distant view of Windsor Castle, and fourteen of the Royal offspring represented as playing on the lawn." And even with that there was one left out, probably the Prince of Wales, the future George the Fourth, whose dignity might have been hurt by such a representation. But there is no need to ransack Royal lumber-rooms to find a portrait of Frederick, Duke of York, the last holder of the title before the present creation. His florid, open countenance is to be met with in numerous prints and innumerable

caricatures of the period. And is not his effigy to be found standing on the top of his own column, looking down on his favourite parade-ground in St. James's Park?

A more fitting memorial of one who was not undeservedly popular as "the soldier's friend" is the Duke of York's School in Chelsea, founded for the education of children whose fathers had been in the ranks. According to Greville, too, the Duke of York was the founder of the Covent Garden Theatrical Fund, for the Duke was a good friend to the profession, and might be styled the actor's friend as well as the soldier's; and, indeed, circus-riders and artistes of all kinds could reckon upon the Duke's good wishes, and when there was a double claim, as in Philip Astley's case, of old trooper and present performer, why, Frederick of York might be counted upon as a sure and liberal patron.

Yet the Duke did not escape calumny. There was that unlucky affair in which Mrs. Mary Ann Clarke was concerned. Mrs. Clarke, it was well known, made rain and fine weather at the War Office as well as in the Duke's susceptible bosom, and she carried on no doubt a profitable traffic in commissions and appointments. But such things were in the manners of the day, and it was only that the Duke did not grudge his friends their little pickings, for he was above touching such base money himself.

The Duke had all the intrepidity of his family, and although as a commander his lot was generally to retreat, it was not for want of personal courage. And his duel with Colonel Lennox will be remembered, when he waived all the privileges of his Royal blood and met the Colonel on the "field of honour." The quarrel, after all, was no great matter. It was said that the Duke, at a masked ball, had been addressed by two masks in most insulting language, and that he challenged one as Colonel Lennox, and bade him, if he dare, remove his mask—which the other would not do. But Lennox denied the imputation, although the Duke, who was his commanding officer, evidently did not believe him. And later on, the Duke asserted publicly that Lennox had been addressed at D'Aubigny's club in language to which no gentleman would have submitted. Hearing this, Colonel Lennox on parade went up to the Duke at the head of his regiment, the Coldstreams, and demanded an explana-

tion. The Colonel was put under arrest; but it was intimated to him by the Duke that out of uniform "he, the Duke, wore a blue coat and was easily to be found." The two met on Wimbledon Common, at twelve paces, and it was arranged that they should fire together. At the signal, Colonel Lennox fired, and the ball grazed His Royal Highness's curl—that Brunswick toupet that was "de rigueur" long ago—but the Duke himself did not, and would not, fire. Nor would he make any acknowledgement that Lennox had acted in an honourable manner. No; he had come there to be shot at, and the other man might blaze away as long as he pleased, but that could not alter his opinion. And so the matter ended, for it was evidently impossible for Lennox to go on making a target of a Royal Prince.

A later picture of the last Duke of York is given us in Greville's diary. The Duchess lives at Oatlands Park, "the worst managed establishment in England," and the Duke, his official business over, comes down in honest bourgeois fashion from Saturday to Monday. Dinner lasts from eight to eleven, enlivened with a good deal of loose talk, which both Duke and Duchess delight to hear, though not to share in. As soon as dinner is over whist begins, and lasts as long as any one will play, the Duke being equally amused whether the play be high or low, although he prefers "fives" and "ponies." But the Duchess does not care to lose her money, and plays only for half-crown points. With congenial spirits the whist lasts till four or five in the morning, yet the Duke is up betimes. Perhaps he never goes to bed. The Duchess does not, anyhow, but wanders about from room to room, taking a nap on a sofa when she is sleepy, and sallying out at any hour of the day or night surrounded by her troops of dogs. Next to dogs, monkeys and parrots are her chief delight. Mankind she tolerates, especially such as bring her new dogs, or rare monkeys. Yet she is an agreeable hostess, clever and well-informed, as became a Prussian Princess, and has a sovereign contempt for form and ceremony of every kind.

The Duke did not forget that he was a dignitary of the Church—his father had given him the prince bishopric of Osnaburg when he was six months old—and attended church regularly each Sunday morning, returning to a hearty breakfast of cold meats. If he burned the candle at

both ends, he took care to keep up the supply of combustible matter, and so lived on to his sixty-fourth year, tormented a good deal—as were most of the free-livers of the period—by premature infirmities, but dying comfortably enough in his easy-chair in his grey dressing-gown, just as if dropping off to sleep.

If we want another reminder of the last Duke of York, we may find it in Regent Street, within sight of the Duke's column, where stands York House, now full of animation as the Junior Army and Navy Stores. Here, of old times, soldiers would mount guard, and mounted orderlies would gallop up, and crowds of officers would pass in and out. For here is the site of the town house of His Royal Highness of York, Commander-in-Chief of the British army. The Duke had to resign in 1809 on account of the scandal about Mrs. Clarke, but his brother reappointed him soon after with the general approval of those concerned. The slim-looking gentleman with the eagle nose, who calls sometimes, is Arthur, Duke of Wellington. The Duke of York, although he appreciates the services of his great subordinate, has no very cordial liking for him. To his intimates the Duke confides his feeling "that he was sacrificed to that Wellesley. But for the influences exerted for him, he, the Duke of York, would have been selected for the command in the Peninsula, and all the glories of the subsequent campaigns would have been his." That was the poor Duke's grievance to the last. Like the old commodore, he was not allowed to fight any more. Yet he died in harness after all, disdaining to surrender even to the grim commander of all the commanders-in-chief.

MY FRIENDLY JAP.

A STORY IN TWO CHAPTERS. CHAPTER I.

MY one excuse is my inexperience. I was such a "Grif"; so new to Japan and Japanese ways. I hardly think I was to blame. Of course if I had known—but then, how could I? I had only been in Yokohama a little over a week, and had been so busy settling down that I had seen and learned nothing, literally nothing, of the natives, or of their appearance, or their various works and ways. To me they appeared all alike. I suppose that to a shepherd, worthy of the name, each member of his flock eventually individualises itself from the rest; but that presupposes a

certain lapse of time, and the possession of what is called a "seeing eye," together with intimate contact and association. Whereas, as I have said, I had only just arrived, and they all looked so tremendously alike—nay, with their peculiar notions as to dress, there were no distinctions of sex, at all events that he who ran might read; and this, in the little I had had to do with them, led to some rather droll mistakes. Perhaps I lacked the discriminating eye referred to; possibly also that accounted for my so seldom recollecting faces—certainly mine was no royal memory in that respect, and I found them very droll—and here I mean the natives, as well as the mistakes. But then they, the natives, were invariably cheerful, attentive, and good-tempered, so that when one of them singled me out for particular—

But that was how it all began.

No sooner had I settled down in the place than I found that living in hotels would never do. It was far too noisy, and neither comfortable nor cheap. There were plenty of reasons in short why I should arrange to board with a private family, always supposing that I could find one willing to take me in—as to which the more cynical among my friends intimated I should find no difficulty whatsoever.

"Look here, Jepherson," one of the more candid ones said, "don't you be an ass! You know pretty well the best and the worst of this place by now, and, if you will take my advice—which I don't suppose you will, by the way—" And here Jernyngham, who was my senior by some five or six years, smiled after a superior and especially aggravating fashion quite his own, which smile said plainer than words, "You youngsters are such fools!" while aloud he went on, "You will just stay where you are. Why, if you take it on the ground of cookery alone, you will have to 'sup full of horrors,' to say nothing of——"

And here followed a whole catalogue of ills I knew not of, which, in the speaker's estimation, far outweighed those from which I sought to fly, together with any possible benefit that I was insane enough to expect might accrue.

Needless, perhaps, to say I was firm—as obstinate as the animal I had been so considerably warned not to become. Else had my story remained untold; and to support me in my resolve I had endless reasons, all of which I proceeded to ad-

vance. I was only out for twelve months. I wanted to see the native life and learn the native "lingo."

But I will pass over the initial difficulties of my plan until the time when I found myself fairly located in the house of a certain—well, he might almost have been styled "Hokee Pokee," so far as my ability to give any adequate idea of his real style and title goes. To simplify matters, therefore, I called him "The Mikado," an appellation that for a time, I have reason to believe, rather frightened and shocked him by its daring irreverence; but Japan being nothing if not revolutionary, nowadays, ended by agreeably titillating that sense of humour, without which no true Jap would be complete. I even learned, after one or two mistakes, to discriminate so far as not to extend the same easily remembered title to his wife, with whom for long my unfortunate tendency led me to confound him; but with the remainder of his numerous family I promptly gave up nomenclature in despair. To me they might all have been twins. Indeed, as I have already stated, the strong family likeness that existed amongst them extended to the whole race as well. There might be differences of degree, but not of kind. Some might be more pleasing as to their expression, or it might be that they were the same individuals in a more amiable mood—I could not tell. How was I to know when all had the same tight, monochromatic skins, the same small, obliquely planted eyes, and the same undeveloped and indefinite features? Not unpleasing in effect—if only from the constant smile, which again by its universality and inveteracy served but to add the final impediment to those I already experienced in the way of identification. It was the "Comedy of Errors" over again, only multiplied a thousand-fold. And the result would have been sufficiently bewildering had I allowed myself weakly to be bewildered, which I did not. I adopted the only course compatible with continued sanity, and either took for granted that each successive visitor to my room—for privacy, as we English call it, does not exist in Japan—was in true Darby and Joan fashion "always the same," or "yet another of 'em," according as to whether they happened to bring with them whatever it was I had asked for or not. Nor did I force this to its logical conclusion by foolishly trying to determine whether the pleasing uncertainty

that so frequently followed on the delivery of my orders, or requests, was due to my having addressed them to the wrong person, or to my own ignorance of Japanese, or the still greater want of knowledge of English shown by my would-be entertainers, of whom some may have known it rather worse than the others, I allow; but to have placed them in the precise order of their demerits would have puzzled Max Müller himself, or the entire body of Civil Service Examiners. That way madness most surely must have lain, while to attack their own language was, for me, quite enough—indeed, I fancy there was some to spare.

However, I was easily satisfied, and in answer to the prevailing characteristic, I cultivated a stereotyped and fairly expansive smile, which served to establish and preserve amicable relations where mere words failed. This, and an inveterate equanimity under no matter what of disappointment or surprise, carried me through fairly well until the time when the first rawness of my "Griffin" days wore off, and I began imperfectly to know my way about.

Of course, Jernyngham waxed derisive and facetious at my expense. Wanted to know how many of my brother puppies I had cannibalistically swallowed; and enlarged knowingly on the mystic horrors of the various appetising soups that so regularly graced my table. But what of that? I could afford to disregard his sneers, and rise superior to his vulgar chaff, could safely set it down to the envy which really was its cause. For that I was exceptionally comfortable, and far more at home, at about half the cost, than whilst at the hotel with him, was quite early placed beyond a doubt.

To this end the attentions of one in particular of my entertainers conduced in no small degree. A bright and merry little mortal, who, whenever I was in the house, was never far away, contriving always to be at hand in a morning to wish me "Saionará," or good-bye; or lying in wait in the evening for my return, to greet me with a pleasant word or smile, the latter, at all events, certain of being properly acknowledged, because correctly understood. Untiringly solicitous for my comfort—innumerable the surreptitious bowls of "saki," or more open, because less intoxicating, tea, that were unostentatiously brought and left by my side. So gently, too, was the spiriting done as

never to disturb. If I were busy writing, the supposed necessary was laid down softly and without a word; and retiring noiselessly to a corner, there, on the thick rice-straw mattress which overlaid the floor, the watchful bearer would sit and smoke, and smile, and smile again, and smile.

Is it any wonder, then, that a strong feeling of good fellowship should have sprung up between us? The interest shown in me was so patiently unobtrusive, and yet so persistent and undisguised, that gradually there was established an almost electric chain of sympathy between us, whereby I grew to derive the same pleasure from the smiling presence of "Fido," as I began to call my friend, that I might have done from that of a favourite and well-trained dog. It was company. I was less lonely; and yet it never in any way interfered with my work. And when, growing weary of my task, I would lay down my pen with a sigh, I had but to turn round to meet that invariable, absorbed, and interested smile, the effect of which was so soothing and so consolatory that often enough I felt inclined to call out, "Poor old fellow! good old Fido!" and, with many a gentle pat, bid him, "There, there, old chap; lie down!"

But work once over for the day, my companion developed qualifications more valuable still.

It appeared that, whichever of the family might be the worst, this was the best English scholar of them all. And really the society was so "mutually improving" as to be surprising. Each was by turns master and pupil, and the exchange was delightfully advantageous and provocative of mirth. It was not unlike a pleasant game at which both sides won. And never, surely, whether as teacher or as taught, was any one ever found more entirely patient, intelligent, enthusiastic, or obliging! And oh! how we did enjoy ourselves and each other's blunders! And, oh, how Fido laughed! With what a spontaneous gaiety and lightness of heart! It was infectious. And how well we grew to understand each other's looks if, as was not infrequent, we halted for a word. Truly my tutor was a jewel, a treasure; and each day that passed gave me cause to congratulate myself on my marvellous good fortune.

Naturally the fellows at the office noticed, linguistically, how I went ahead—as how could they fail? It was marvellous—

miraculous! As Jernyngham said, with his customary sneer:

"Really, Jepherson, we did not know you had it in you!"

And well might he be surprised. I was myself; for, spite of the time Jernyngham had spent over the language, he certainly had it not in him, whereas I soon grew quite an authority on the "beastly patter," which was such "awful rot" that not a fellow there but would have been glad enough to shirk it.

Not only that, when I come to think what life in Yokohama might very well have been without the distraction afforded by my little friend, I can never be sufficiently thankful for having been saved from such unmitigated dulness.

The theatres, although amusing at the first, soon became tiresome and slow; even the juggling and balancing, wonderful though they were, soon palled; while to see men apparently turning themselves inside out, under the thin pretence of performing acrobatic feats, was too painful and disgusting to witness more than once.

But when I came to know more of the language, and could mix with the people without what was passing around appearing so much of a sealed book, then did the life grow interesting indeed.

To see the same old human nature under such different disguise was a perpetual wonder and an ever-recurring joy; for priests, people, warriors, daimios, mikados, up to that crowning absurdity of all, the great Tycoon himself, all were fresh and full of charm. The very greetings in the streets were an endless delight in themselves, with their ceremonious advances and retreats, their frequent genuflexions and rubbings of the knees; they were better than any play; while for the farce there was the native "masher," who feels himself "quite English, don'cher know," and who would startle even a nation that can proudly point to "Arry," dressed as he is in a "pot" hat and a really striking suit of "dittoes," for which he has abandoned his own dignified and more becoming garb. He looks too mean for anything; evidently feeling that the stately walk that became him so well in his own more "swagger" dress is hardly, perhaps, appropriate to the latest thing in tweeds, and yet, so far, unable to hit on one that fits them any better.

But this, of course, was "advanced" Japan; the more conservative element was profoundly interesting. Art, manners, and

observances, all were full of charm, and assisted as I was in my understanding of them by such a capable exponent as was mine, the time passed quickly and agreeably enough, until the day when my eyes were fully opened.

It is possible that I may have crowed over my fellow-clerks unduly; unconsciously, too, I must have made them feel the burden of my admitted superiority, for Jernyngham grew sore, and, if that were practicable, nastier than ever.

He was always asking after my "Professor," and whether he could not form a class; and, evidently wild at his own short-sighted waste of time, wanted to make up for it out of hand. But I took no notice of his taunts, any more than of his wish to join me at my "crach"; for that would, indeed, have been too much. I might stand him at the office, but not the home as well. He would have introduced the one discord in the perfect harmony, would have upset and spoiled the whole thing.

But with little Bob Englefield it was quite another matter. I did at last ask him to dine. But then Bob was Bob, and Jernyngham's antithesis; a genial, good-hearted, kindly little soul, and him I did not mind. So, as I say, one night I arranged to take him home to dine.

I shall not readily forget that night, the last, as it turned out, of the old easy-going relations. Not that it made any surface difference all at once; but you shall hear.

I am not going to inflict on you all the various details of the dinner, or of how Bob and I put on Japanese dress, and squatted most uncomfortably on the floor in our desire to do it honour, nor recite the countless and seemingly interminable courses, for our host had been lavish in our behalf. Enough that when we went back to my room to enjoy a quiet cigarette Bob enquired reproachfully:

"Well, old chappie, where is this natural and native phenomenon of yours? Why don't you trot him out? And why, may I ask, was he not at dinner? You surely are not going to keep him dark and sell me after all?"

"Not at dinner?" I repeated. "Why, it was he who waited on us by his own particular desire."

And I stared in astonishment at Bob, who, after a slight pause, due evidently to doubt, rolled over on the floor in a perfect paroxysm of emotion—or was it pain?

At first I thought he was ill, and a fear

lest the unaccustomed food might have disagreed with him moved me to ask:

"What is it, old fellow? Indigestion or——"

"Indigestion! G'arn away!" he replied. "Indigestion! You—you artful old fraud. Oh, you sly old——"

But here his loquacity gave way before my very genuine astonishment, and, with his mouth agape, he stared wildly back.

"D'you mean to say you have the nerve to sit there and tell me you—you don't know?" he cried at length.

Then, as I looked a whole catechism of interrogatories, he had another roll, to presently rise again remonstrant.

"Oh, dear; oh, dear! This is a game! It's too funny for anything!"

"So glad you are enjoying it," I rejoined with dignity. "Possibly I should myself," I went on pleasantly, "if I knew where the laugh comes in."

And "Here it is!" shrieked Bob, going off once more; as, to us, entered my little friend, bearing the inevitable tea and saki on a tiny lacquered tray; and hearing the laugh, nothing would serve but the new-comer must join in quite heartily, and without restraint.

This was too much for even my patience, and I suppose I must have looked hurt, for Bob tried to sober himself sufficiently to explain; but no, it was useless; off went the happy and ridiculous pair again, while I was "left lamenting" my ignorance of the joke. But even Bob was tired at last, so wiping his eyes, he asked demurely:

"Had you not better introduce me to your—friend, you—oh! you disreputable old——" But words failed him to characterise my offence, while my indignation mounted higher and higher at each fresh outrage, to say nothing of the mystification.

"Is it necessary, do you think? You appear to get along—to understand each other well enough without." At which severe remark Bob suffered a relapse.

"You don't mean to say you—you persist in your absurd pretence?" cried he next. "You do? Then allow me to introduce you to Miss—Miss—oh! my——" He broke out again, and:

"Yes, yes," smilingly assented my friend. "Miss—Miss—but no, not 'Ohmy!'" Whereupon I stared as the full absurdity of the situation began to dawn upon me.

"Can't you see, you short-sighted old——"

But of course you can; don't tell me! You know well enough that your fidus Achates—your Mentor—is a 'musumi'—a girl." And with that they both shrieked again; and this time, though sorely against my will, I was obliged to turn the cachinnatory duet into a trio.

But Bob was right, and I must have been blind indeed not to have found it out before. It explained so much—everything, in fact—and for a time I felt an awful fool.

Certainly, as Bob conceded, up to a certain age, the Japs, both male and female, do look uncommonly alike to a stranger's not too penetrating eye; but we had seen each other so often and for so long—had grown so intimate—that my ignorance was almost incredible; yet ignorant I had been, and I made up my mind to be well laughed at for my pains.

"But I say, look here, you know! What do you mean to do, old fellow, now that you do know, you know?" was Bob's next enquiry, when we found ourselves again alone.

"Do? How do you mean?" I repeated blankly.

"About Miss—Ohmy, or whatever her name may be."

"Why, what should I do?" I asked again stupidly.

"Oh, come, you know, this is too bad! It was all very well so long as you did not know he was a she—I mean a girl—and 'pon my word, I'm half inclined to believe you didn't; but, now that you do know all about it, don't you know?" He paused suggestively.

"Well, and what of that? Does it make any difference—really—I mean? I don't see that I am called upon to do anything. I shall leave it to—her, in fact. We are great friends, and get along famously with each other's language, so—"

"That's all right, but just think of the mischief you may be doing. She's only quite a girl!"

"Say a child, and then you'll be nearer to the mark," I interposed, in all good faith.

"H'm! I am not so sure of that; but anyway, you must put an end to it at once!"

"Nonsense, what call have I to interfere?"

"Hang it, how stupid you are! I take it for granted you don't mean any harm."

"Certainly not," I cried, indignant once more.

"But just think of the harm you may do without meaning it. You surely don't want the girl to grow fond of you?" And Bob looked unutterable things.

"Well, I rather think she has done, don't you know," I answered in all innocence, for I could not rid myself of the pet dog or child idea of our relations all at once. And really, and in all honesty, I felt it had amounted to nothing more.

"And are you making a fool of her?"

"I think it is I who have been the fool, so far," I objected mildly, and trying to smile as I remembered my ridiculous misapprehension.

"Then take care you are no worse," was Bob's blunt rejoinder. "Remember these people are not all children, as you appear to suppose. They are men and women, like ourselves, only with a difference. And once they feel themselves alighted, or in any way aggrieved, they have no great respect for human life. Take care, then, you do not—"

"My dear fellow, what on earth have I to fear? I have told you I am not going to do anything—"

"Except get into a deuce of a row. Can't you understand that, spite of his having lowered himself by taking you as a lodger into his house, your host is by way of being something of a swell, or, at all events, he is connected with those who are very high up indeed—wearers of the double-handed sword, and all that—who, if they imagined themselves offended, would think no more of trying its edge on you than I should of lighting another cigarette." And Bob threw the old one away as he went on solemnly: "A nice mess you'll be in if some fine morning the irate and insulted father challenges you to a bout of 'hara-kiri.'"

"What in the name of mystery is that?"

"The happy despatch, the Japanese form of the duello. You would look well if Papa Ohmy were to neatly and expeditiously alit himself open before you had time to object, or even know there was anything wrong."

"Surely he would never be such a fool. And, anyway, so long as he did not practise it first on me," I was beginning, when Englefield interrupted me in all seriousness.

"Oh! he would never be guilty of such a gross impropriety—such an outrage on the law of honour. That would be left for you to do."

"You mean, seriously, that—"

"You would be expected to do the same."

We are not in France, remember. The duel may be entered into quite as lightly here, but neither party is expected, or, in fact, allowed to survive."

"Still—but what nonsense. Given that he had any cause for dissatisfaction, which, of course, is absurd, his code of honour would have nothing to do with me. I should never dream of doing anything so——"

"Disagreeable. No, perhaps not. Then you might be thankful to get away from Japan with a whole skin. Take my word for it, he has crowds of relations, any one of whom would as soon perform the operation for you as not. I would not give that for your chance of escape."

And Bob threw away the stump of another cigarette.

"But the whole thing is preposterous, absurd. Why, half an hour ago I did not even know——"

"And you expect the paternal Ohmy to swallow that? Don't you wish you may get it? I don't quite see why it has been allowed to go on for so long, but it's a form of Anglomania, no doubt. He's been bitten, and thought you were a catch. I should say clear out, and mind you don't get caught; unless, by the way, you intend—that is, have no great objection to marrying Yum-Yum—I should say Ohmy. You may have strong views as to the ultimate fusion of races, and all that. Tastes do differ, and one never knows." And the speaker shrugged his shoulder expressively.

"But my dear fellow," I urged, "have I not told you over and over again that I have no views of any kind whatsoever?"

"True, now you mention it, you have. I keep forgetting. You certainly have told me more than once already—it's a sort of 'Mary had a little lamb' affair; well, mind you don't find your way to the butcher's along with the lamb, that is all, my eccentrically platonic young friend. And look here, don't get huffy, you know; it's not the least use in the world. Besides, if I've said anything I'm sorry for, why I'm glad of it—see?" And with this truly enigmatic saying by way of apology, Englefield shook himself together preparatory to going home to his hotel. "You had far better come with me, and send for your traps to-morrow," he finished, as we shook hands.

But no, I let him go, though feeling altogether more uncomfortable than I should have cared to own.

It was perfectly true. I was both inexperienced and—yes, perhaps a fool. Any-

how I had acted as one. And if I found it so difficult to explain myself to a friend and a countryman of my own, so as to win his entire confidence and belief, why it would simply be impossible to do so to a native in a case such as Englefield had supposed; and what if my little farce were to end in a tragedy after all?

What ought I to do?

THE THIRTEENTH BRYDAIN.

BY MARGARET MOULE.

Author of "Catherine Maidment's Burden," "Benefit of Clergy," "Mr. Wingrove's Ways," "The Vicar's Aunt," "Dick's Wife," etc.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

"THEN you'll be back about six o'clock, Keith?"

"There or thereabouts, sweetheart. You are sure you won't be lonely?"

It was a bright morning, and Etrenne Brydain and her husband stood together beside the tree of the pine avenue that was nearest to the house. Brydain wore shooting dress and carried his gun. And as Etrenne answered him, she adjusted the strap of the sandwich-basket that hung from his shoulders with pretty care.

"Not the least bit," she said brightly. "Good luck to you, dear; good-bye."

And then, though the good-bye was followed by a farewell kiss, she turned and sauntered by his side down the avenue.

"How quaint and pretty the village looks this morning, Keith!" she observed. "When are you going to introduce me there, by the way?"

Brydain settled his gun on his shoulder with a light laugh.

"Well, to tell you the truth, sweetheart," he said, "I gather from Mackenzie's lugubrious demeanour that we'd better defer that introduction for a bit. The superstition of our people about here is as incredible as their frankness. The Brydain doom is a cherished spectre of theirs, and they look upon you as its instrument, and upon me as a blinded victim!"

The light died suddenly out of Etrenne's face, taking some of the colour with it, and she stopped suddenly.

"I don't think I'll come any further, Keith," she said. "Good-bye." Then, as he stooped to kiss her again, she put both arms round his neck. "Good-bye, oh, good-bye, my dear," she said, and then she turned and went back alone to the house.

Two days had passed since their arrival at the Great House; Etrenne was already at home in it. She had become familiar with the house and its rather curious domestic arrangements very quickly, extraordinarily quickly it seemed to her, since hers was by no means the familiarity of satisfaction. The weather had been very fine, and the previous day they had spent in a long walk, during which Brydain had shown her all his boyish haunts; and to-day she had persuaded him to go for a day's shooting. Since that first evening, Etrenne had not seen Marjory Mackenzie again. She had, of course, seen Mrs. Mackenzie, who had apologised profusely for the girl's appearance, and had gone on to give many anxious assurances to Etrenne that she should not be annoyed in the same way again. These she gave with not a few tears; for, in truth, poor Mrs. Mackenzie had been much disturbed by the untoward circumstance; and the trouble that had been growing upon her all the summer had to a great extent worn away her customary placidity.

Ever since Brydain's visit to his home in May, Marjory's demeanour had undergone a change—as marked as it was at first inexplicable to her mother and Mackenzie. After Brydain's departure Mrs. Mackenzie had found her daughter growing day by day more absent-minded, more forgetful, and more entirely incapable than ever; and after observing her carefully for some weeks, and growing very anxious with the observation, she had, under the pressure of her anxiety, confided her fears and wonders to her brother-in-law, half hoping that Mackenzie would ridicule them, and say contemptuously that Marjory was to him in no way altered from her usual self.

But, to her consternation, Mrs. Mackenzie found her own feelings only reflected in Mackenzie. He, too, had observed the girl keenly, he also having had his attention attracted to her by some slight incident soon after Brydain's departure; and with some hesitation, at the sight of poor Susan Mackenzie's grief, he, on receiving her confidence, said that he too had noticed a change for the worse in the girl; he had thought her unaccountably silly and unreasonable, and he added reluctantly, "daft."

Whether the combined and closer surveillance which her uncle and her mother exercised over Marjory after their confidence absolutely hastened in the girl the

crisis which was inevitable, or whether it only seemed to their anxious care that that crisis came on more rapidly, the fact is certain that it did come. It was only a week or two later that Mrs. Mackenzie and her brother-in-law had tacitly accepted as a terrible fact, to be dealt with as they best could, the truth that Marjory had lost her senses, and would never, in this world, be accountable for her actions again. Mrs. Mackenzie's eyes were dim and sunken with tears for days; and Mackenzie's grief for his brother's "lass" showed itself in an odd and awkward attention to Marjory which he never before had shown her. He would take her out with him for walks, he would patiently bear with her incomprehending talk, and he would try with an endeavour that was pathetic, both from its source and its futility, to amuse and divert the girl.

Marjory's senselessness showed itself only in very quiet ways. She would, when spoken to, stare vacantly, with a bewildered look in the great brown eyes, at the person speaking, as if she understood nothing of what was being said; and she would answer more or less incoherently. Now and then she would suddenly ask for some household work to do, and begin to help her mother in one of her own old accustomed tasks; but the work would come to an end as suddenly as it had begun; and in the midst of scrubbing the kitchen floor, perhaps, or laying the table for dinner, Marjory would turn away abruptly, leave everything just as it was, and wander out into the avenue, to walk up and down it like a restless ghost. Most of her day, indeed, was spent in wandering up and down, backwards and forwards, throughout the house and its immediate vicinity outside. Sometimes she was quite silent in her wanderings, but more often she sang to herself in a low crooning voice, and what she most often sang were the last two lines of the old rhyme concerning the Brydain doom. Sometimes her wandering would end abruptly at one of the trees in the avenue, and she would stand leaning against it for hours, staring vacantly at nothing, and apparently lost in thought. But, as Mrs. Mackenzie had assured Etrenne, she was perfectly harmless.

Etrenne had to some extent recovered from the strange impression she had received on that first evening. But she could not, reason against it as she would, get rid wholly of the sense of oppression which had come to her then. It was

considerably lighter, and it grew lighter still with the sight of the evident content and happiness her husband felt in being in his own home, but it did not leave her; it hung over her like a shadow, not in itself very heavy, but heavy enough to dim the sunshine where it fell.

All around her was a vague and wholly undefined atmosphere of horror, sometimes weaker, sometimes stronger, but always present, and telling on her nerves more than she cared to acknowledge to herself.

The sense of oppression showed itself plainly on her face now, as she walked slowly up the avenue alone, after parting with Brydain. She looked straight before her as she walked, and she was all unconscious that she was being watched by a pair of wide, wild brown eyes. From behind a tree, Marjory had watched with a concentration weird in its intensity the parting between Etrenne and Brydain, and when Brydain was gone, Marjory concentrated the same intent gaze on Etrenne. Following her every step with her eyes, she waited until Etrenne was a little in advance, and then, stealing out from her hiding-place, followed her up the avenue with noiseless, creeping tread.

Etrenne, on gaining the house, turned her steps to the library, where she had left her work. She did not much like the great dining-room, and after the first evening she had scarcely entered it. This morning, feeling the autumn air chilly, she had asked for a fire after breakfast, and it was sparkling and crackling brightly now, as she re-entered the room, giving the old library a used and cheery appearance.

She had left her work on a table under one of the windows, and she crossed the room to get it. But as she took it up a disinclination to go on with it took possession of her, and she folded it up, and turned to the glass bookcase standing between the windows—the one that held the novels. She had just chosen an inviting-looking yellow-backed novel, and was turning away to settle herself down by the fire with it, when a sudden uneasy sense as of the presence of some one else near her made her catch quickly at the bookcase door. It was, however, she told herself a moment later, just one of the fancies to which the old house gave rise. She shut the door firmly and moved away. As she turned her face, she started violently. In a corner by the door, her slight figure pressed into an incredibly small space, her

head bent forward, watching Etrenne with fixed, devouring brown eyes, was Marjory.

Etrenne shuddered sharply. The sight of the girl seemed to bring back at once all the terror of that first evening, and an unaccountable feeling of fear and dread that turned her sick and faint. She caught at the table for support. She was not actually afraid of Marjory; she did not connect the feeling definitely with the girl's personality, but she did not like her presence; she did not like the sensation of being watched by her, and another shudder ran through her as she sat down, and turning to Marjory, tried to speak. Etrenne was very sorry and pitiful towards her, and wanted to show her this.

"Marjory," she said gently, though with a third irrepressible shudder, "did you want me?"

But Marjory did not speak. She slowly took her eyes from Etrenne, and then, without a word, went singing out of the room.

Etrenne, left alone, looked nervously around her, and then rose and shut the door. She came back to her easy-chair and took up her book again, but she could not read. On the page, in the sparkling fire, everywhere she looked was that white, thin face, and wide staring brown eyes. She shook from head to foot for a moment. Then she stood up resolutely, and throwing down her book, determined that she would go out of doors for a walk, and get rid, if possible, of the haunting impression the sight of the girl had left.

She ran upstairs quickly, to come down again a few moments later in her hat and jacket. A very pretty picture she made in her trim walking dress as she set out with a quick step along the avenue. At every step her spirits rose under the influence of the bright, fresh morning air and sunlight, and at every step the impression of Marjory's face and the pressure of the indefinable shadow grew fainter and lighter, until at the end of the pine avenue she could have laughed aloud from sheer reaction of spirits. She had set out without the least decision as to her destination, and at the end of the avenue she paused wonderingly for a moment. As she considered, the sun caught the red roof of a house in the village, and suddenly her words to her husband flashed back into her mind. It seemed to her that those words showed her exactly what she wanted to do. In her light-hearted, excited frame of mind, she thought suddenly

that it would be "great fun," as she expressed it to herself, to go into Brydain village all by herself, and to make the acquaintance of the village people, as it were, in spite of themselves and unaided by her husband. It would be delightful, she thought, to tell him afterwards that she had taken their prejudices by storm. For with great faith in their attachment to him, and a little very pardonable belief in her own attractions, Etenne never doubted that they would, in spite of Keith's words, give her a ready welcome.

Five minutes' sharp walking brought her to the entrance of the village. She could see distinctly that there were groups of people scattered here and there in the street. It was twelve o'clock—always a cheery, sociable hour, for the women, with a refreshing sense of having got through the hardest part of the day's work, generally came to their doors at noon, when it was fine, to loiter, and gossip, and comment to each other on the doings of the children who came trooping home from school or played in the street. Etenne thought she could hardly have chosen a better time. She came towards the nearest group with a smile on her face and a greeting on her lips. As she approached she became aware of an intent stare from the women composing it. This she was prepared for, and her pretty cordial smile only deepened; but she was not prepared for what followed. The foremost woman turned abruptly round as Etenne reached speaking distance, and catching up the child clinging to her skirts, went towards her own cottage, entered, and shut the door. The other members of the group followed her example with one consent. Etenne very nearly stood still in her amaze at this proceeding; but she rallied herself quickly and went briskly on, though with a cold sense of chill creeping over her, cheerily intending to begin conversation with the very next person she met. But there was no such individual.

As if Etenne's coming had been the signal of an approaching storm, all the women in the street retreated before her, and calling their children, hurried into their own homes, and as the first woman had done, shut the door. By the time poor Etenne, frightened and hurt, had reached the end of the street, there was not a human being visible in it. As she turned, pale and trembling, to retrace her steps, it seemed to her tear-blinded eyes that it looked exactly as it had done on

the night of her arrival. Even the fact of the sunlight made no difference; the very sun looked cold and forbidding now.

Hurrying home with a very different step from that cheery haste of half an hour ago, she stumbled among the rough stones of the road, and finally, exhausted and wretched with her disappointment, she leant against the doorway of the Great House for support before going in. The door was open, as it usually was on a fine day. From within came a low, murmuring sound. At first, Etenne was too confused to notice it; but as her senses reasserted themselves, she became aware that it was Marjory's voice, and she was singing:

For the thirteenth this doom shall wait,
He shall win the bride who brings his fate.

The words floated to Etenne's ears. With a tremendous effort she dragged herself across the threshold. There was no sign of the girl, only the low monotonous words, repeated over and over again, filled the air, it seemed to Etenne. Gathering all her forces, she crossed the hall into the library with a sort of terrified rush. There, in the chair in which she herself had been sitting, was Marjory, rocking herself backwards and forwards as she sang.

Six hours later Brydain, coming home from his long day's shooting, went upstairs in search of his wife, whom he had failed to find in either of the rooms downstairs. He opened the door of their room and uttered a little exclamation of surprise at finding it, by comparison with its usual comparative sombreness, a blaze of light. Everywhere where candles could be placed they were placed and lighted, and a large fire was blazing.

"What an illumination!" he said laughingly, and he stopped short as Etenne slowly rose from the large chair in which she had been half hidden. A wan little smile trembled on her lips. She was evidently making a desperate effort to appear as usual, but her face was deadly pale, and she trembled from head to foot. "Sweetheart!" he cried anxiously as he caught her in his arms, "sweetheart, what is it?"

For the second time since her arrival in the Great House of Brydain—for hardly more than the second time since she had been a little child—Etenne broke down with sobs and tears, the irrepressible sobs and tears of overstrung nerves.

"Oh, Keith!" she said, "I didn't mean to tell you—I didn't mean to disappoint

you; but I'm frightened here — I'm frightened! Take me away!"

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

ETRENNE BRYDAIN sat before the fire in the dining-room at the Great House with some needlework in her hands; she was very pale, and there were dark shadows under her eyes, but there was a curiously relieved expression about her whole face.

The collapse of the night before had first amazed and then distressed her husband inexpressibly. Filled with remorse and self-reproach, which left no room for either wonder or question, he had wanted to take her away from Brydain there and then.

"We needn't stay another hour, sweet-heart," he cried; "not another hour."

And he had actually fetched his "Bradshaw," and looked out the very next train by which they could leave Carfrae.

But Etrenne—brought gradually back from the mysterious gulf of terror into which she had fallen by his voice and his presence, and soothed and reassured by the ease with which escape from Brydain was by his words invested—had grown calmer as he grew more insistent. She did not want to go that moment, she said with a tremulous little smile; to-morrow would do, or even Wednesday. She did not want, she finally declared, to go before Wednesday; only — and here she drew her husband's arm a little more closely round her—she would like, if he would not be very disappointed, to go then. And this point settled, with impetuous eagerness on his side, half the load of oppression which had brought it about seemed suddenly to vanish from Etrenne. The thought that she could get away from it at any moment seemed to deprive Brydain of half its terrors; the thought that in thirty-six hours she would actually leave it behind her, so raised her spirits that those intervening hours seemed to her merely an interlude easily to be faced.

With this feeling in her mind, and with some self-reproach at the thought that she was taking her husband away, she had pressed Brydain to go out for a last day's shooting. This Brydain had, at first, flatly refused to do. He would not leave her alone again, he declared — nothing should induce him to do so.

But Etrenne, fortified by the sense that every hour was bringing nearer her departure from Brydain, and her return to

cheerful accustomed ways and habits in London, had begged and prayed, and finally commanded with pretty peremptoriness, telling him that if he refused she should for ever reproach herself with having spoilt his holiday. And he had finally yielded to her insistence. Etrenne said good-bye to him on the doorstep with a smiling face, and then ran upstairs and began to collect her possessions in readiness to be packed for their journey. Her spirits rose higher and her heart grew lighter as her occupation emphasized for her the fact that she should so soon be gone. The oppression and the horror had receded so far, as the thought of London drew nearer, that they had almost left her. She almost wondered how she could ever have been so frightened, and was half ready to laugh at herself for her fears.

Mrs. Mackenzie followed her upstairs to offer her assistance in packing up, and to express voluble regret at their departure, and tentative and anxious hopes that she had found Marjory no annoyance.

"The poor child's clearer-headed a bit to-day," her mother said. "It's wonderful how her senses comes and goes like." She paused a minute and then added: "She's very much took up with you, ma'am. I've not seen her take so much interest in no one since she went off her head."

Etrenne smiled kindly. In her security she could think pityingly of Marjory's affliction.

"Poor girl!" she said gently. "She may get better, Mrs. Mackenzie."

And then she went downstairs, and as she went there floated along a distant passage the same low sound of singing that had so shaken her yesterday. But half of the thirty-six hours had gone, and Etrenne did not change colour, though she shivered alightly. "Poor girl!" she said to herself again. "Poor child!"

And now, at five o'clock in the afternoon, several hours more had worn themselves away, and Etrenne, sitting in the dining-room beginning to expect Brydain's arrival, was almost happy. She had not been into the library that day. She had passed its door each time with a little shudder, and had established herself in the dining-room, though she disliked it, without a thought of any alternative.

She had done a long piece of her embroidery, and as she stretched it out on her knee to look at it, she glanced up at the clock. She saw that it was just past five, and she rose and walked to the window to

look out for Brydain. There was no sign of his coming, and as she stood there looking out, she heard a sound behind her and turned with a start, all the horror which had receded from her closing suddenly round her again.

She saw that it was Marjory; but the girl was standing in the doorway carrying a little tray, on which stood a coffee-cup. But for the moment Etrenne could gain no hold upon herself; she could neither move nor speak. Then, with a sudden and violent rush of reaction, sudden sweeping condemnation of herself as very silly, she moved, and bent forward kindly to the girl.

"Have you brought me some tea, Marjory?" she said; "that is very kind of you. Oh, no; it is coffee, isn't it? Thank you; thank you very much."

Without a word, but with her brown eyes steadily fixed on Etrenne, Marjory nodded, and putting the little tray into the hand Etrenne extended for it, turned and left the room.

Etrenne turned with the tray in her hand, set it down on the table, and stood looking at it. Then she gave herself a little shake, apparently a physical expression of a mental process.

"It's abominable of me!" she cried half aloud, "to feel so horrid about her. It would hurt her feelings dreadfully if I didn't drink it."

She paused another moment, and then put out her hand quickly towards the cup; she was just lifting it to her lips when the door opened quickly to admit Brydain.

Etrenne put down the cup with a little exclamation of welcome as he came up to her and kissed her.

"All right to-day, my darling?" he said, looking at her anxiously. She smiled up at him brightly and reassuringly.

"Quite right, dear," she said. "This time to-morrow we shall be back in London. I had no idea I was such a dreadful cockney, Keith!" she ended, with a little laugh.

He echoed it gaily, and walking up to the fireplace threw himself down in one of the arm-chairs, and let his head rest against the back. It happened to be the same chair on which he was sitting on that long-past evening when he had first told Mackenzie of his intention to leave Brydain. Even now Brydain very seldom sat in the chair that had been his father's.

Etrenne, looking at him, thought fondly how handsome he was. She also thought

that he looked a little tired. The blue line on his forehead was standing out with peculiar distinctness.

"Are you tired, Keith?" she said.

"Not a bit!" he answered cheerily, "only awfully thirsty! What do you think of some tea?"

"I'll order it!" said Etrenne. And she was turning towards the door to carry out her intention when her eyes fell on the coffee-cup standing on the table.

"Here's a cup of coffee waiting for you, Keith," she exclaimed. "Marjory brought it to me just now. Poor child, I suppose she had some vague idea of being attentive. I'm not thirsty, and I don't want to hurt her feelings; do drink it for me." She took the cup from the table as she spoke. "Milk?" she said interrogatively, taking in her other hand the little milk-jug from the tray.

Brydain laughed.

"Well, I don't know that coffee, black or otherwise, is just the thing to quench a man's thirst; but if you're anxious to have it disposed of, Etrenne, I don't mind drinking it. And I'll drink it black, thanks."

She turned and carried the cup across the room to him where he sat. He took it from her hand, and as he did so she stooped and kissed him.

"That's very good of you!" she said lightly. "And now I'll go and order you as much tea as you like, and then I shall go straight upstairs and finish packing up. You'll come when you've had your tea, won't you? You may bring me some, if you like."

He held her for a moment more, pulling her face down to kiss him again. And then he followed her with his eyes as she left the room.

The door closed behind her. Brydain lifted the coffee-cup to his lips, and drank its contents at a draught.

"I'm sair fashed to have kept you so long without your tea, Brydain. Susan Mackenzie let the fire die, and the kettle was long in boiling."

It was Mackenzie who spoke, and he came round the end of the table as he did so, having there set down the tea that Etrenne had ordered for her husband. From where he stood only the outline of Brydain's figure was visible, in the autumn dusk, half sitting, half lying in the chair in which Etrenne had left him.

Brydain did not answer. "Brydain,"

Mackenzie said with a note of interrogation in his voice, "Brydain, will ye no take your tea?" Still there was no answer.

"Brydain!" Mackenzie repeated his summons in a rather higher key. The figure in the chair neither moved nor spoke, and the old man drew a step or two nearer, and looked anxiously into his face, sharply outlined against the dark background on which it rested. "Brydain!" he cried again, and the interrogation in his voice had given place to fear. "Brydain! what ails ye, man? Speak to me, man!" He stretched out a trembling hand as he spoke and laid it on the shoulder of the man who was dearer to his old heart than anything else on earth, shaking it wildly in the horror that was overwhelming him. "Speak to me, laddie!" he cried wildly, "speak to me!"

But Keith Brydain would never speak again in this world. That white, still face would never change, the blue eyes never smile any more. He lay back in the chair cold and dead. Here, in his own home, in the very room where he had declared his disbelief in it, long ago, the doom that had pursued him with sure, unfaltering step, had reached him at last.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

DOUBT or mystery as to how the tragedy of Brydain's death had come about there was none. No sooner was it too late to avert the catastrophe than the course of events which had led to it presented themselves with the terrible distinctness that only comes when comprehension is of no avail. The feeling in Marjory that Mrs. Mackenzie had spoken of as her "interest" in Etrenne showed itself, when it was too late, as an intense hatred—a hatred that seemed to her heartbroken uncle and mother utterly unfounded and crazy. The cup of coffee that Marjory had carried to Etrenne without her mother's knowledge, and which Etrenne had given to her husband, had contained what must have been a large quantity of laudanum. The laudanum

had been given to Mrs. Mackenzie by the Carfrae doctor whom she had consulted on the subject of the sleeplessness which was one of Marjory's symptoms. And some vague remembrance of the warning given in her hearing, at the same time, as to its powers, must have imprinted itself on the girl's uncertain brain.

Such were the facts as they seemed to every one connected with them. And in the main they were right. But the thread on which they were strung, the clue that gave them their true significance, was never known to any one on earth.

As Marjory's mental power failed, one all-dominating idea remained with her, growing stronger as all else grew weaker—the idea of Brydain and his doom. To avert that doom, to save him from the wife who was to bring it upon him, was the ruling impulse of her life. For her unhinged mind right and wrong were not. Etrenne was to her only a malignant influence in Brydain's life, to be removed from it at any cost.

But it was not to be. The very action that should have saved Brydain, that should have frustrated the doom for ever, was turned to its fulfilment. The weird that had been waiting for Brydain and Etrenne for nearly three hundred years was doomed to the very end.

Whether its consummation was also the consummation of a series of undesigned coincidences; whether it was indeed the fulfilment of the old law that visits the sins of the fathers upon the children; or whether something lay behind greater and more mysterious still, who shall say?

Etrenne, in her heartbroken widowhood, asked herself these questions, and turned from them with a shuddering awe. Tredennis, in the desolation of his broken friendship, thought of them long and deeply; but his thoughts only brought him to recognise, as all men must, at some period of their lives, that there are problems for the solution of which they must wait.

For the prophecy was fulfilled to the very letter. Keith, the thirteenth Brydain, was the last of his race and name.

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PRICE TWOPENCE

MISS LATIMER OF BRYANS.

BY ELEANOR C. PRICE.

Author of "Alexia," "Red Towers," "The Little One," etc.

CHAPTER VI. IN THE PORCH.

THAT wonderful day—on which Geoffrey Thorne first realised Poppy Latimer as a woman, and knew the strength of his love for her—was followed for him by a sleepless night. He sat long at his window, under the quaint shadows of hanging vine-leaves, and watched the moon till it sank behind the south-western mountains. He walked up and down his room, not knowing whether he was absolutely happy or utterly miserable: now feeling that he would give worlds to end a life which must be nothing but disappointment, then remembering that she had asked him in plain words to come to Bryans that autumn. Of course he would go. Better death near her than life far away. In short, Geoffrey worried himself with all the imaginations natural to a man in love—a good, honest fellow at heart, and unfortunately in love with the moon.

He went away from the hotel very early in the morning, fetched his sketching things from the studio, and rowed across the lake in a gold mist, as the sun was just rising, and Herzheim with its mountains glowing in most enchanting beauty. There was a little village, far away on the other side, at the opening of a long valley, which had already been the starting-point of several sketching expeditions. Farther up, the views of lake and mountain were lovelier than any to be had from Herzheim; and the town itself, with its mediæval roofs and towers, came into one of these views

like a city in a dream. A former sketch of this difficult subject had not satisfied him. He meant to make another to-day, and then, what could he do but offer it to Poppy? It must be better than anything he had done yet. She certainly cared for art. She had been charming about his pictures in the studio, and still more charming last night when she talked in the orchard.

A little picture to hang, perhaps, in her own room at Bryans. While Geoffrey planned it, his boat skimming over the gold-rippling water, he felt once more that instinct of power and triumph which had flashed upon him like a bird of passage yesterday by the river. To work for her was better than to sit and dream about her. Perhaps the poor soul felt too keenly even now that despair lay at the end of that road of dreams. He was an odd mixture of fact and fancy, of certainty and doubt, of romance and matter-of-fact; clever and self-deceiving, yet ready at any moment to accept disillusion; living, in fact, in the expectation of it. He knew very well that this new-old love had sent him off his balance, suddenly becoming an influence in his life with which he could hardly reckon. Yet, at the bottom of things, his self-confidence lay unstirred. Even now he knew, with a sort of disgust, that Poppy Latimer did not hold his whole life in those slender hands of hers.

It was, perhaps, as well for Geoffrey that he did not know Poppy's own state of mind after that talk with him in the orchard. For her thoughts of him were almost affectionate. "Il est mon pays," a French girl might have said; and Poppy, the high-minded, the well-bred, had much of this feeling in her thoroughly English nature. He belonged to her home, to her

old Bryans. He was a nice recollection of childhood—when a little girl had been quite ready to accept the loyal devotion of a big boy. And she liked him now, very, very much, with almost more than a friendly feeling. She liked those good dark eyes of his, full of honest simplicity and enthusiasm. She liked his love for his art, his true feeling for nature; she liked, little feudal lady as she was, the consciousness of his admiration and reverence for herself. There was nothing unnatural in these; they were what they had always been, except that grown-up people are different from children, and that now it was possible to be real friends—to really understand each other. Any ambitious development of such feelings never occurred to Poppy as possible; it would be "too stupid." But truly and literally she never thought of such a thing, even when Geoffrey seemed to envy the mountains their poetical interest for her. Poppy's was what may be called a "one-fold" nature, with no suspicions and few stray ideas. Dear Poppy, in this and other ways, was a woman of an earlier time than ours.

Her very real personal feeling for Geoffrey Thorne took the shape of much anxious thought about his future, which the inferiority she felt in his art made painfully doubtful. She was also much occupied with the plan her aunt had suggested: his marriage with her favourite village neighbour. It would be very nice in many ways, she thought. Especially nice for Maggie, who would always want some strong friend to help and love her. The only question was—and this showed, more perhaps than anything else, Poppy's feeling for her artist friend—whether the girl would be good enough for him.

Poppy was quite ready, like Madame de Choiseul before the French Revolution, to arrange marriages for her vassals; but she never wished to use her power tyrannically. Even that charming Marquise, with her mixed objects of benevolence and fun, took pains to enquire whether her boy and girl peasants had "*de l'inclination*" for each other, and thus met with her disappointments now and then.

Poppy was not likely to take any stronger step than what she had already taken—misunderstood alas!—that of suggesting to Geoffrey that he had better go home in the autumn. Then he and Maggie were sure to meet; and an artist was sure to admire a beautiful girl; and Maggie,

under her teaching, had learnt a great respect for genius. So, perhaps, it would not matter if she could not quite appreciate Geoffrey. In fact, he must not marry a woman who could not from her heart admire his drawings. That meant, Poppy had to confess to herself with a sigh, that he must not marry a very clever woman. She must look up to him and admire his character, and make life easy for a rather sensitive temper. Yes, it is always better, Poppy assured herself, when two geniuses do not marry. A clever man's wife ought not to know too much. Above all things, she must not be or even think herself cleverer than her husband.

On the whole, Maggie would be a good wife for Geoffrey, and especially because she could not draw a line. And so, having decided this matter to her satisfaction, Poppy fell asleep at last.

Perhaps the man who had loved her from a child would have been glad to know that so much of her thoughts were given to him on the last evening that they were to remain unoccupied with more interesting concerns of her own. Yet it was much better that he should know nothing, for the knowledge of her innocent plans would have given him keen pain at the time, and he had not arrived at that sad stage of love when a lover finds himself thankful for any thought at all.

Poppy found the next day rather long and wearisome. Her aunt had caught a slight chill from sitting so long in the moonlight, and this brought on a tiresome little cough to which she was subject. Her bright spirits had gone down, in spite of expecting her friends, and she announced that she could not go out, but meant to spend her time writing letters till Mrs. Nugent arrived.

Otto lingered about the hotel in the morning and tried to talk to Poppy, who had taken herself into the garden with a book. He did not find her very sociable. Jealous in advance for Arthur, he did not quite like the way in which her eyes wandered now and then down into the garden, up to the terrace, across into the orchard; and he was personally injured by the consciousness that she was not very anxious for his company, and not particularly sorry when he observed that he was going down to meet the twelve o'clock boat. His people might arrive, though he hardly thought it likely. Otto half suspected that the painter was lurking somewhere not far off, and would appear as

soon as he was out of the way. He more than half suspected that this was in Poppy's mind, too; certainly, if she had any such idea, she took no pains to hide it. But he went and he came back—alone, for his people did not arrive—and found Poppy also still alone, still reading with a little air of distraction, as if her eyes were in one place and her thoughts in another. He was very right; she was thinking of Geoffrey Thorne, wondering if anything she had said last night could possibly have hurt him; wondering where he was, and why all that long morning had passed without his coming to speak to her.

It was with an unequalled coolness, which fairly astonished the cynical mind of Otto, that she got up, laid down her book—for the luncheon bell was ringing—and said to him in her earnest, preoccupied way:

"Have you seen my friend this morning?"

"Your friend?" muttered Otto, looking at her hard, and assuming a stupidity he did not possess; "your friend? You don't mean your aunt, by chance? I didn't know you had a friend here."

If he thought that such a poor affectation as this would deepen by one faint shade the colour in Poppy's soft pale cheeks, he was very thoroughly mistaken.

"Of course I don't mean my aunt," she said, smiling, with perfect good-temper. "I know you have seen her, too. I mean my friend the artist, Mr. Thorne."

"Oh, I beg your pardon," said Otto. Had she been in the least degree less calmly self-possessed he might have found himself remonstrating on the dangers of philanthropy and of giving the rights of friendship to second-rate people, who were sure to take advantage of them. However, he contented himself with saying: "I didn't recognise him, somehow. No, I have not seen him this morning. Gone out sketching, I dare say. By-the-bye, from what you and Miss Latimer said last night, I suppose he is nothing great in the way of a painter?"

"He has not gone very far yet," said Poppy; and she found her instinct of defending Geoffrey suddenly at war with her honest convictions. "He loves art, and knows a great deal. As to his work, I am really not a judge, nor is Aunt Fanny. But success is not out of reach for a man who really cares and means to succeed. That is the great secret; don't you think so?"

"My dear Miss Latimer," said Otto, like an ancient oracle, "I have never believed in the sageness of that sage who defined genius as 'an infinite capacity for taking pains.' It is one of those modern doctrines which have flooded the world with bad work. Genius and pains have nothing on earth to do with each other, and generally exist—in this sense of pains—in totally different people. It is seldom genius that takes pains, and the man who takes pains is seldom a genius. Once, somebody mourned to me over a friend who could write and wouldn't. I pointed to the far sadder and commoner spectacle of men who can't write and will. I'm afraid it is the same with painting, do you know?"

"You don't believe in work, then," said Poppy; "the work of a life?"

"Indeed I do. But in imaginative art, like painting or poetry or music, I deny that work without genius can produce any high success. Together, of course, they can do anything. Work is the hand of genius. Genius can do little without work. But work without genius can only grope in the dark and crawl in the mud. That's it. Genius is light and wings. But I never saw it defined to satisfy me; and no wonder, for we only know it by meeting it, and it is a rare encounter."

"When you meet it, how do you know it?" said Poppy.

"The answer to that is as hard as the definition. It seizes me—*c'est plus fort que moi*. I do know it."

"Naturally, do you think? Does every one?"

"Certainly not always. Only trained minds, consciously. But unconsciously, with certain kinds of genius, yes. The worst of a trained mind is that it is too apt to bring its own ready-made theories. It requires a high cultivation to trust one's own instincts."

"I should like to know how far I might trust mine," said Poppy thoughtfully.

"A good long way, I should think. Do you mean with regard to Mr. Thorne's pictures?"

"Yes; I was thinking of them."

"I feel so convinced that they are bad," Otto said quietly, "that I wish you could bring yourself to discourage instead of encouraging him."

"Mr. Nugent, why do you feel convinced that they are bad?"

"First, from your doubtful tone; second, from the young man's own appearance. He is not original."

"He loves his art and he works hard," said Poppy.

Otto smiled.

"We have already decided that that doesn't signify much," he said.

They had been walking up and down the terrace, Otto rather pleased at this opportunity of talking to her and at her tone in speaking of the artist. She was not so foolish after all, he thought, beginning to understand Poppy. Her friendship, as she called it, seemed to be little more than the patronage which some women think it necessary to bestow on any form of art which approaches them.

Now the smiling and impatient face of Miss Fanny Latimer appeared behind the glass doors of the dining-room, and they went in to join her.

After luncheon, Otto went off for a walk, planning to be back in time to meet the six o'clock boat. Poppy sat with her aunt for some time and wrote a letter to her friend Maggie Farrant, in which, among the interesting things of Herzheim, she mentioned Mr. Geoffrey Thorne, the artist, and his picturesque studio overhanging the churchyard wall. "It was nice," she said, "to meet a little bit of home so far away."

When her letter was finished she took it with her aunt's to the post-office, and came lingering back across the quaint bridge that crosses the rushing green river, stopping to look at the old silver in a corner window that hangs perilously over the water, slowly climbing the hill and turning into the irregular street, its roadway deep-sunk between the dark shady arcades along which the foot pavements run.

Miss Latimer was never quite happy that her niece should go about alone. Poppy, on the other hand, would not endure the company of a maid, and had the most supreme confidence—which, indeed, her aunt could not help sharing—in her own power of taking care of herself. There was, in fact, especially when alone among strangers, a stately unapproachableness in Poppy's height and bearing, and a perfection of fair calm dignity in her face, which guarded her as well as a regiment of aunts and maids. And Poppy had all the fearlessness of that French Duchess who only answered, "Qui? Moi?" when they told her that she would certainly be insulted if she went into some parts of Paris alone.

The truth was, that few amusements pleased Poppy better, with her grave

manner and in her plainly-cut clothes, than to poke about alone among the quaintest and oldest streets of quaint old towns abroad, and to come home laden with old china, old needlework, old books and prints, or, better still, any rubbish characteristic of the place. On this special afternoon she crossed the broad calm sunshine from the bridge, and went slowly up in the shadow of the dark arcade, till she came to one of the little shops full of cheap pottery belonging to Herzheim. Here a long talk with a very little girl and a very old woman resulted in at least two dozen specimens being put aside for the foreign customer, into whose fair face and soft grey eyes the sellers looked up with admiration equal to their pleasure. Perhaps it takes a good deal of beauty to touch the heart and the appreciation of a German-Swiss. Perhaps it is because they look on the English as nothing but walking purses, that it is often difficult to make a spark of human sympathy shine in their dull and business-like eyes. Anyhow, the little girl at the pottery-shop ran down the street that afternoon and talked to her companions of the beautiful English lady; and the old woman told her gossips never to talk of white skins again, but if they wanted to see one to go up to the "Blumenhof" with this basket of little pots, and ask to see Mademoiselle—what? "Latmer," or some name like that, not quite impossible.

When her shopping was done, Poppy went out of the street up a narrow paved lane which ended in a long, steep, winding flight of steps between rugged white walls overrun and festooned here, as everywhere at Herzheim, with trailing scarlet creeper. This mounting way led her into the precincts of the Castle. If she wished to go back to the "Blumenhof," she had nothing to do but to keep straight on, follow some steps and a stony lane downhill, and thus find herself almost immediately in the narrow side road that led to the hotel. To the left of where she stood, through low archways, ran the path leading into the churchyard and round to that turreted corner on which Geoffrey's studio window looked down.

Poppy was not very sure of these ways; but she stood still and looked round her, breathing a little quickly after a rather hurried climb up the long steps. Her eyes were attracted by another archway, through which a flood of soft yellow sunshine was pouring. Within it, lit up by

the gentle western glow, she seemed to see a procession of quaint figures in pale, dream-like colour on the wall. This was something, an old-world corner of Herzheim, which she had not seen before. She walked straight out of the paved court into what looked like a little treasure-house of sunshine, and found herself in the western porch of the church, low, square, and bordered with white arches, two of which opened straight on the brilliant sky and the mountains, with a foreground of red, curly-tiled roofs below in the hollow, and the murmur of the town coming up softly and musically mingled with the rushing of the unseen river.

Poppy recognised the original of one of Geoffrey's sunset sketches; but how far, far more beautiful! The two open arches had low stone sills, worn hollow with age, the rather dangerous play-place of generations of young Herzheimers. Poppy sat down in one of these, in the full warm light from the west, which was so dazzling that she presently turned her head away and looked from beautiful nature to the work of man in the porch, which the most mediæval-minded person could scarcely have called beautiful. But it was certainly strange. Long before Herzheim was Protestant, when the church doors, now locked from morning till night, used to stand open, and grand music used to roll out across the red roofs and the lake, and gorgeous processions used to march up and down those white lanes and flights of steps, now only trodden once a week by the black-coated townspeople on their way to a long, stiff service or a stroll in the high churchyard; before the days of whitewash, inside the church or out, some religious-minded painter had treated these low walls and this vaulted roof, built on purpose for him, as a casket to hold jewels of colour, and had painted there the chief objects of his faith, an easy lesson to be learnt on the way into church. Wind and weather, neglect and whitewash, had done their worst, and of some of his devotional figures not much but an outline was left. But the great subjects that had occupied him could be easily traced—the Annunciation, the Adoration of the Magi, the Crucifixion, solemn and shadowy with stately saints waiting by, Saint Margaret with the dragon, Saint Catherine and her wheel, Saint Lucy and her lamp, and a fourth no longer to be recognised. One of the four great frescoed subjects was also destroyed, and of the emblems of the Evangelists,

each in his own corner, only the great eagle of Saint John was left unwhitewashed.

There would have been something awful in the fixed gaze of those stiff and solemn faces, more effective still because half faded away, and seeming to suggest that the eyes of a whole ancient spiritual world were riveted on the opening life of one happy English girl, if it had not been for the sunshine, the deepening colour and clearness as evening drew on, the beauty and cheerfulness of all that outside world; pigeons fluttering past with wings that shone and flashed softly, and settling for a moment with gentle murmurs on roof or chimney just below; merry laughter of children from the town; and now, unnoticed of Poppy, the shrill whistle of a steamer. But the lower the sun sank, the straighter he shone into the porch, and the more vivid became the life of those watching faces. Poppy watched them back with a sort of fascination. It did not occur to her to move away, for this seemed to her the most beautiful spot in the town. Through a low archway leading into the churchyard she saw green lanes and flowers, all beginning to glow with that deep brilliancy which every moment was filling the air. She was hardly thinking, only enjoying quite vaguely, almost foolishly for a woman who had the character of being matter-of-fact. It was all a new world, and she liked being alone in it, without Aunt Fanny's cheerful remarks. She had an idea that this was a fine opportunity for thinking about life and making good resolutions. Those faces, the embodiment of such old beliefs, seemed to give life a wider meaning, too. They had much in them to trouble a modern mind. For instance, they were the faces of martyrs. Perhaps, Poppy thought, hovering vaguely about a great truth, no one but a martyr is really worth a great deal, either in this world or another. "I should like to be a martyr," she said half aloud, looking up at Saint Margaret and smiling; "but there is no chance for me."

At that moment, just as the sun was setting, the church clock was chiming, the gold light that filled the porch shone in its richest, deepest glory, Poppy found herself no longer alone. She heard footsteps and Otto Nugent's voice at the same moment. Turning her head, with the thought that Geoffrey Thorne might be with him, she was surprised and puzzled by meeting the extremely handsome,

sleepy, good-humoured eyes of a tall young man—a stranger—fixed on her with a vividness of curiosity which was almost startling.

"My brother, Miss Latimer. What a beautiful place you have found!" said Otto pleasantly.

ARMY COOKERY.

To any who have made the acquaintance of the British army at home or abroad, it must have been evident that the daily fare of the private soldier was lacking very much in variety and comfort. The raw material might be fairly good; the pound of flesh duly weighed out with not too much bone, or more than a fair amount of sinew; the daily accompanying pound of "ammunition" bread might be wholesome if not appetising, and the private's own contribution to the mess fund might be expended in a profitable way, to procure a sufficient supply of pepper, salt, and vinegar, with mustard, of course; and those popular vegetables, potatoes and onions, might appear in their season, which season is happily all the year round. But the result, as it appeared on the soldiers' bare, if well-scrubbed table, was not what would be called in the language of the day a proper square meal. Fair enough in quantity and quality, it required the finishing touch of good cookery.

It used to be said that the soldier liked his meat thus spoiled—sodden if boiled, and if baked well burnt and dried, and that he despised soups and "messes"; and this may have been pretty true of the case-hardened, long service soldier of other days; but it is certainly not true of the young soldier of the present day, who is little more than a growing boy when he first joins the ranks, and whose physique requires careful building up with good food and good cookery if he is ever to do you any credit as a soldier. An ill-cooked dinner suggests a visit to the canteen for a drink as a natural consequence, while a savoury meal offers no such provocation to thirst.

Curious it is to note the difference between the two services in the matter. In a general way, the naval officer lives on board ship in a plainer and less luxurious way than the military man at his mess, and the solid comfort and plenty of the sergeants' mess in a good regiment is probably superior to anything attained by warrant

officers afloat. But with Jack himself it is quite different. The good soups, the savoury stews, the satisfying dumplings are all good in their way, and the perfumes between deck when dinner is under weigh are often such as to set the appetite on edge. No such delightful savours are to be met with in the bare barrack-rooms, or about the huts and tents of the military camp. All this may be due to the fact that the sailor has inherited the traditions of helpfulness and handiness, so long the characteristics of the man-o-war's man. The sailor's mess is composed of experts, who themselves are capable of taking the cook's place in their turn, and they have something to say in the management of the affair. But Thomas Atkins has rarely the chance of showing his handy qualities, even if he possesses them. The soldier, too, has been unlucky in being generally provided for "by contract." We know what that meant in the days of Queen Anne, when the soldier's bread and meat, and everything he wore and used, paid toll to the Commander-in-Chief, and after him to who can say how many ranks of grasping officials? In the great Peninsular War, Wellington looked after matters sharply enough; yet contractors grew rich, and immense fortunes were made here and there, while the men often marched and fought on deficient rations of mouldy biscuits and the saltiest of salt horse. Even in the Crimean campaign, when, after the privations of the first dreary winter, every effort was made to supply the soldier with comforts and even luxuries, habit and routine interfered with the benefits intended, and the soldier's daily fare was but little improved.

Those who shared in the latter campaign may remember the great Alexis Soyer's visit to the camp, a portly, genial figure in kepi and neat grey uniform, as he rode about with the air of a general officer of gastronomy. But even the buoyant and sanguine Alexis owned himself discouraged by the stolid indifference of the British private to the niceties of the cuisine. Soyer, indeed, in his efforts to popularise good cookery, came half a generation too early; yet his deeds live after him, and it is pleasant to see for all these years that Soyer's "st. . . ." is coming into recognition as a primary requisite in the army kitchen.

For in the army, as elsewhere, the master cook has been abroad—elsewhere more correctly the mistress cook, for it is chiefly to the female professors of the art

that the recent revival in the culinary world is due; but in the army the man cook is a necessity, and does not suggest any notions of luxury and expense. An excellent School of Cookery has been established at Aldershot, where the art is studied in its relation to service in barracks, in camp, and in flying column. Naturally the aim is to teach the soldier how to do his best with the appliances that are at the disposal of an army in the field. As regards the "*batterie de cuisine*," such appliances are simple enough. A few huge ladles, such as Bumble might have used for the workhouse skilly, a trident to harpoon the joint that is swimming in the big pot, a chopper, a few knives, and a nest of camp kettles complete the equipment. But as well as these, as an official memorandum points out, "the following articles are required in addition to those provided at the public expense, namely: Paste-board and rolling-pin at the rate of four per battalion; skimmer, one per company; saucepan, one per corps who have means available for using such, for making gravy." A keen observer writing about soldiers in an early number of "*Household Words*"—1851—remarks in effect, "There is no such thing as a saucepan, and dinner is cooked in a copper." Now that reproach is removed—at the expense of the men's contributions; but only in the case, it will be observed, of a corps who have means available for using it.

But although the official memorandum in its rigid departmental phraseology has often a faintly humorous flavour, there are excellent practical hints to be met with, and the motto of the soldiers' kitchen, "*Skin, simmer, and scour*," is one that might be adopted by more pretentious establishments, and hold its place with Miss Edgeworth's "*Waste not, want not*," as a text over the kitchen chimney-shelf.

Yet instructive as are the departmental memoranda, a little oral explanation will give us a more lively idea of the actual messing of the rank and file of a regiment up to date. And here is a smart young corporal who has passed the school, his scarlet tunic protected by a great white apron, and the white "*bonnet*" of the chef replacing the martial headpiece. Said the corporal:

"This is the way of it. Each company has its colour-sergeant, who looks after the messing of the company. At the end of every week the sergeant prepares a form showing what the company is to eat

for each of the seven days following. Here is the form with a column for each day of the week, and a line each for breakfast, dinner, and tea. Below is a list of the various dishes that can be had, and the more change there is the better. Now on Monday, suppose we say, breakfast, brawn or a kipper; dinner, pea soup, roast meat and Yorkshire, and rice pudding. Then next day you would have a stew for dinner—it might be brown or plain, or Irish, or curried—no soup, but suet pudding; and on the following day you might have a meat pudding or a sea pie, and with that perhaps a raisin pudding or a jam roll. Then for breakfast and tea there's choice of porridge, cheese, liver and bacon, eggs, rissoles, your bloater or your haddock, as well as your brawn, which is a handsome dish at all times, and well liked.

"Well, when the weekly bill has been signed by the commanding officer, it comes to the sergeant cook of the regiment, who draws the meat and bread from the commissariat stores or the contractors, as the case may be, and he has to arrange the supply of meat accordingly, keeping joints for the baking or roasting companies, and pieces for the stewing companies. Now the Government ration, as you know, is a pound of bread and a pound of meat a day straight—nothing else, not even a pinch of salt. For all the other stores the colour-sergeant has to cater with the company's money—three-pence a day, that is, stopped from each soldier's pay. He buys the vegetables and all the et ceteras, and each company has its locker in the cook-house where they are kept."

Now we will suppose the cook-house fires lighted, the ovens baking, the coppers boiling—or rather simmering, if you please, according to regulation—and we will ask the composition of what is getting ready for No. 5 Company. That, too, is according to regulation. Here is the official receipt. Ingredients required for sixty men:

Brown stew, mixed vegetables, six pounds; onions, three pounds; flour, one pound; pepper, one and a half ounces; salt, three ounces; and the meat, of course not the full sixty pounds, for the assistant cook has taken out the bones.

"And about the bones," remarks the corporal, "there is a good deal to be said. You may have heard of Her Majesty's ships lying at anchor till they grounded on

their beefbones. Well, that wouldn't be allowed now, not in either of the services. The bones are carefully cut out and go into the stock-pot"—the gift of the great Soyer to the British soldier. "But not indiscriminately. No, the bones of each day are tied up in a net with a tally annexed, and each day they boil, or, rather, simmer in the pot for five or six hours. At the end of the third day they are taken out, and there is not much goodness left in them." Clearly not, from the specimen before us. Our old dog would feel insulted at the offer of such an article, fond as he is of bones. "But what comes out of the stock-pot when it is cold is a firm, nutritious jelly, and seasoned with salt and pepper, and with peas added, or lentils, or other vegetables, make capital soup, as you may believe."

While bones are one of the cardinal points in the new army cookery, dripping is a second and even more important item. "You would hardly credit, sir," says the intelligent corporal, "what a difference the scientific treatment of dripping has made in the soldiers' messing. Formerly dripping would be bought for making pies and puddings, and could not often be got with the mess-money; but now, under the new system, there is sufficient for all the pastry and things required, and some left to sell. And the secret of this is constant skimming of soups and stews, taking care of the dripping from roast and baked meats, and cutting off all superfluous fat before cooking and 'rendering it down.' Why, the value of three months' dripping in an average infantry battalion, calculated at the low rate of fourpence per pound, has been shown to amount to more than twenty-two pounds, all of which goes to improve the soldiers' fare, and which, under the former wasteful system, was actually chucked away."

All this is very good hearing, and it is pleasant to find that new methods and the Aldershot School of Cookery have so far improved Thomas Atkins's bill of fare; but when it comes to the clash of arms, then may perhaps cookery, like many other refinements, have to take a back seat. Let us see how our corporal is prepared for taking the field. Conceive your regimental cooking train set down in the midst of a windy common or in a stiff ploughed field. There are your camp kettles, your regulation ladles and choppers, and the transport waggon has luckily turned up with the day's meat supply and fuel; but for the rest you have a clear

field and nothing more, and seven hundred men waiting for their dinner.

But the corporal is not in the least flurried at the predicament he is in. With a flying column it would be simply an affair of digging so many kettle trenches, each with a funnel-shaped mouth, where the fire is built, and terminating in a low chimney built with sods. On the top of the trench are ranged the camp kettles, and the interstices filled in with sods and clay, or anything handy. Where there is only loose sand, or on hard, rocky ground, a wall trench must be made, of parallel walls of loose stones, with the pots hanging from sticks placed across, and the fire built beneath. But with the prospect of less hurried movement, a "broad arrow kitchen" would be established—a more elaborate arrangement of trenches all leading to a central chimney, on the same principle as the flying column trench. On this could be cooked the dinners of seven hundred men; and it is only to be hoped that there will be seven hundred men there to eat them, for a battalion of that strength is rather a rare bird in these short service days. But the corporal would not be content with just stews and boils; he would establish a number of Aldershot ovens. And the receipt for making an Aldershot oven is as follows:

Take a barrel—a difficult thing, perhaps, in private life, but not so on the march, where "returned empties" are not insisted on. Having got your barrel, roll it to the place fixed up for your oven, cover it with earth; make a sort of tumulus of it, in fact, as if you were burying a warrior chief, but leave the front open where the head of the barrel has been knocked in. When you have got a good firm crust of earth about it—clay for choice, but the stiffest bit of soil, anyhow, to be found in the neighbourhood—set fire to the barrel. When the barrel is burnt up, the result should be a sort of cave, with a crust of baked earth about it tolerably smooth and firm. Make a good fire within, and when it burns low draw it out and put in your joints, and your pies, and whatever you may have to bake, and fill up the front with sods. If all has gone well, your batch will come out cooked to the best advantage. As to the chances of the top tumbling in, or the whole furnace collapsing upon the savoury baked meats and pies, the corporal thinks that there would be no room for such mishaps under his management.

Altogether, we may come to the conclusion that the condition of the soldier in respect of his daily food is much improved since the establishment of a school of cookery, and the adoption of common sense views with regard to cooking. It would still be desirable, one would think, to give the private a little more personal interest in the matter, and something in the way of choice. Nor would the bonds of discipline surely be unduly relaxed by giving the men some control over the quality of the supplies by means of a "mess committee" chosen by the soldiers themselves. If the Government gave an entirely free ration, there would be less reason for this, but as the soldier actually subscribes to his mess, there seems to be no sufficient reason why he should not have a voice in its management. There is no rank blasphemy about such a suggestion, anyhow. As it is, there is often a hidden current of dissatisfaction with things culinary which may sometimes flare out into open insubordination. Our corporal, indeed, will say nothing to the discredit of the butcher ware, on which his skill is exercised, except that it isn't quite equal to what a private gentleman expects to get from his butcher; and that "soldiers ought to have good teeth." It is a question, too, whether a little more elasticity in the matter of rations would not be advisable. A pound of meat a day is too much in the heats of summer, when meat, too, is often unavoidably tainted before it reaches the soldier's mess, and there should be the power of substituting other kinds of food more suited to the season.

But these are matters of organisation which have nothing directly to do with the question of cookery for the soldier. The great fact remains that the light of scientific cookery is gradually being diffused through the British army, and it may be hoped that the soldier's experience in such matters will be of service to him when he quits the ranks, and that when he finds a home of his own he will be able to live as well as he did when he was "with the regiment."

A PEEP AT VENEZUELA.

AT Trinidad—West Indian Trinidad, not Trinidad the treasure island—one hears a good deal about Venezuela in general and Caraccas in particular.

"Oh, you must go to Caraccas! Fine

old Spanish city, old Spanish life, splendid buildings, any amount of first-class hotels." "You mustn't miss the Caraccas railway; beats the St. Gothard into fits." "Of course you'll have a run over to Venezuela! You'll never repent it," and so forth. So we, in innocent belief that in the multitude of counsellors there is wisdom, determined to go to Venezuela.

Before you get to Caraccas you must get to La Guayra; before getting to La Guayra there is a little sea voyage to be performed. Sometimes this sea voyage is unpleasant. When we went it was fine; we were told to be thankful for it. Arrived at La Guayra, the question arises, What came we out for to see? A line of rugged mountains, some of them tolerably well clothed with foliage, some of them bare, red, and unattractive, at the foot of them a straggling town of white houses with red roofs, clustered beneath an ancient fort, and terminating in a line of wharfs and warehouses.

The steamer is wharfed alongside the quay. This is a mercy deserving of thanks, for generally in West Indian waters the traveller, happy in the belief that he has arrived at his destination, discovers that he must make an extra voyage in a small boat. In the instance of Port of Spain, Trinidad, this voyage is about three miles; at Antigua it is nearer four.

The harbour is tolerably well filled with craft, and prominent among them is the Venezuelan Navy, consisting of an old-fashioned American gunboat, of about as much value as a means of offence as the old fort above the town is of defence. Her Majesty's ship "Comus" was here lately. Her name is not popular at La Guayra, for, during some difficulty concerning the Orinoco boundary, she came to keep an eye upon British interests, and received a peremptory order from the Governor of La Guayra to clear out within twenty-four hours or she would be fired upon. At the expiration of that time, instead of clearing out, she hove anchor, struck her topmasts, cleared her decks for action, ran out her guns, and came closer in. Whereupon the valiant La Guayrans, in the full belief that a few minutes would see their town in ruins, packed up and fled to the mountains in most undignified precipitation.

It was Sunday morning when we arrived. We were the only passengers, and we fondly believed that in order to inspect our solitary portmanteau the custom house

officer might be induced to forget the sacredness of the day and accommodate us. But we deceived ourselves, and had to face the fact of a Sunday at La Guayra.

We went into the town, being only warned that Englishmen were not in much favour. In fact, the first thing we saw was a drinking-shop sign representing a dusky damsel, imperfectly clothed, cuddling a flag and addressing a sandy-whiskered gentleman in a sun-hat and top-boots, in the words: "Mister! Yo no sera tuyo! Jamas! Jamas! Jamas!" which, being interpreted, is: "Mister! I will never be yours! Never! Never! Never!"

La Guayra is soon described. Narrow streets of one-storey houses, of which the apertures which serve as windows are closely barred, in the fashion of old Spain; narrow footways and carriage tracks made of uneven boulders; smells innumerable; lounging and spitting men; women with mantillas, and even then ugly; dirt indescribable; drinking shops; restaurants; a couple of poor little tree-planted squares; a railway station; and a mass of warehouses and public offices.

We see all this in half an hour, and we have a long day to kill. There is a cock-fighting pit. The proprietor entreats us to enter. We obey. The place is crammed with smoking, expectorating, gesticulating, shrieking men in shirt-sleeves. A couple of wretched cocks are put into the arena. They have not the slightest desire to fight; but they have to.

With much wile and artifice they are induced to quarrel. They fly at each other in the air several times in succession, and after each flight the fall of a bunch of feathers proves that they must have struck each other. After some minutes, one gives the other a kick or a peck which knocks him out of time. Frantic excitement amongst the spectators and much interchange of coin of the realm.

Poor sport, we think, and walk out. But La Guayra is one of the hottest places in a very hot part of the world, so that when we had seen the cathedral—which in no way differs from hundreds of Roman Catholic cathedrals elsewhere—and had "assisted" at the departure of the Caraccas train, we felt we had done enough, and returned to our steamer.

There are some stirring old memories connected with La Guayra, prominently those which Kingsley describes in "Westward Ho!" Later on, in 1739, we made a mess in attacking it; and the town fort

which so effectively contributed to our repulse and knocked the "Stafford" about so much, was probably that which now grins with toothless mouth over the town. In 1743, Admiral Knowles fared no better against this then "large and handsome town," the ships engaged suffering severely and being obliged to cut their cables and run for it, whilst not a few growls about treachery and cowardice were heard.

We were off to Caraccas the next morning. The railway runs through the town, then through a cocoa-nut palm plantation, and then, with a sharp turn inland, commences the ascent of the mountains. It is a stupendous piece of work, and well worthy of its rank amongst the triumphs of engineering, for the obstacles in the way of its construction were very great, and two—landslips and locusts—are insuperable. But when it is compared with the St. Gothard or the Mont Cenis, from a scenic point of view, sheer nonsense is talked. Wonderful it is as it zigzags up the mountain sides and crawls along the brows of terrible precipices; but from beginning to end there is not a "bit" which is worth transferring to paper. Between La Guayra and Caraccas—twenty-one miles by rail, but only nine as the crow flies—there are half-a-dozen stations, by which is not to be understood that there are half-a-dozen towns or villages, for there are not; but the train pulls up at mere shanties, and whilst the engine takes in water the passengers alight and refresh themselves with warm pasties and neat brandy.

We had a party of Venezuelan girls next to us. The amount of brandy which they absorbed between La Guayra and Caraccas only astonished us a little more than the amount of paint and powder with which they had masked their bold and exceedingly plain faces.

The descent from the highest point of the mountains is very steep, and the downward progress of the train makes a great many people feel nervous; but there has never yet been an accident to a passenger train. The line runs through the wildest and most repellent of mountain solitudes, the bare, sun-blistered rocks of which are rarely relieved by foliage or vegetation save a scrubby growth of cactus. The only evidence of human life is the ancient mule track, the course of which the line follows pretty closely. This is dotted with long processions of mules, trudging along under the blazing sun, as mules have done along this track probably ever since

the first Spanish colonisation of Venezuela. The muleteers are a strangely stupid race, and are not to be persuaded that it is their business to get out of the way of the train, not the train's business to give way to them. Consequently a large number of mules are run over every year.

So far we have been disappointed. La Guayra is a wretched hole. The railway is wonderful, but utterly unpicturesque. So we anxiously look forward to Caraccas, that fine old Spanish New World city, about which we — whose minds are full of the Spanish Main, and the Buccaneers, and the Filibusters — have woven a web of stirring romance. I know the picture I had formed was that of a grand old grey-walled place, serenely basking in the light of its ancient glory, full of odd, twisting streets with carved doorways giving peeps into little tree-planted, fountain-adorned courts, with grand old dusky churches full of priceless pictures and relics, and large shady squares where picturesque crowds strolled and lounged, upon which looked the palaces of long-dead grandees. The picture was distinctly before me, and the more I heard at Trinidad and elsewhere about Caraccas, the more was I justified in believing that for once in my travels the real would fulfil the ideal, and that no such disillusion would greet me as I had faced in Rome, in Tokio, and elsewhere.

In two hours' time after leaving La Guayra we were being tossed and jolted along an uneven and dusty street of the "fine old Spanish city."

"I—I don't think much of it as yet," sighed one of us, looking forth on to squalid, red-tiled houses, own brothers to those at La Guayra.

"Oh, but you must never judge of a place by the neighbourhood of its railway station," replied another, but, it must be confessed, in not a whit more cheerful a voice.

Then there was silence until we rattled up to the door of the Gran Hotel. We paid the driver's exorbitant fare, and asked for quarters. All we could have was a miserable, half-lighted room, opening on to a sort of court, in the midst of which was the mouth of a drain, and for this and our board the charge would be merely twelve and a half francs a day.

Caraccas is a large and prosperous city. There is nothing ancient and nothing romantic in it from end to end. Nor, to compensate for the disillusion on the score

of romance and antiquity, is it an interesting or magnificent new city. It is not a particularly healthy city, for, although one escapes the blazing, breathless heat of La Guayra, the wind towards evening is as bitter as the mistral of the Riviera, and the dust is as bad as that of Kingston, Jamaica.

The cost of living there must be tremendous, if we may be allowed to take as a basis the price of the cheapest decent cigar, which is fifteenpence, and of an afternoon's carriage drive, which is two pounds sterling.

The Government buildings will be very handsome when they are finished, and close to them is rather a quaint old University. Besides these, and one or two fine squares, there is absolutely nothing to interest the stranger. Some of the shops are good, especially the jewellers' and confectioners', for the prevailing influence is French; for the rest, take a few large, bare churches, and dot them about long, narrow, straight streets of one-storey houses, with heavily-barred window openings, the most remarkable features of which are the absence of glass and chimneys.

But let us give Caraccas its due. It is an intensely amusing place.

A Venezuelan regiment passed the hotel. It was composed of men and boys of all ages, shapes, and sizes. They were clad in every variety of slop which could be twisted into the semblance of an uniform. Some wore boots, some wore the native canvas sandal, some wore nothing. Some had regulation "képis," some had handkerchiefs tied round their heads. Each man followed his own inclination as to marching and as to the mode of carrying his rifle. Some men had rifles and no bayonets, some had bayonets and no rifles. Needless to say that both rifles and bayonets were brown with rust. All were smoking. When they halted and formed into line it was with the precision of an infant school.

We were told that before leaving Caraccas it was our duty as good tourists to go to the Iron Bridge, the fashionable resort of Caraccas, and to the Calvario.

The Iron Bridge spans a river just out of the city. The "jeunesse dorée" of Caraccas was taking its daily recreation. This is what it was:

Your young gentleman, having attired himself becomingly, calls on a friend, and together they take a carriage. They light

cigars, supply the driver with one, settle themselves in attitudes presumably indicative of life-long intimacy with boundless wealth, and drive through the streets and over the Iron Bridge.

At the further end of the bridge are restaurants, or rather drinking booths. When a carriage approaches, attendants rush out and take the orders of its occupants. They do not wait to see if the carriage stops; it is not a question as to whether its occupants require refreshments or not, for every carriage pulls up at one of the booths as regularly as at a toll bar. Syrups or glasses of spirits are brought out, and the driver takes his glass in the matter-of-course style befitting a Republic. The carriage continues its way, not for a long drive into the country, but just round the road which crosses the river again a few hundred yards lower down, and brings them back to the Iron Bridge and the drinking booths.

How many times fashion ordains that this little circular tour should be made I know not; but we saw that more than one carriage made it three times, and that the severity of the exercise required a consumption of refreshments at the end of each turn.

Of a more active and daring disposition were the riders. But what riding!

The really beautiful ponies never went beyond an amble—an amble so gentle that the rider hardly moved. He is splendidly attired. The caparisons and housings of his steed are gorgeous. He has big Mexican stirrups, and a long, lasso-like arrangement in the place of a whip; but why does he put his bright spurs on to shoes, so that a more or less dusky bit of stocking peeps between shoe-top and trouser?

What a training for the youth of a nation, we thought! Small wonder that a masculine man in Caraccas is a rare sight; that the local youth are sallow and spotty, with narrow shoulders, and concave chests, and legs like whip-handles! Why, ten minutes at a cricket net or with a pair of sculls would exhaust the best of them for a week, and ten minutes of football would kill him.

We must say a good word for the Calvario. It is a hill which is being turned into a sort of recreation ground of the public garden type. The ascent is hot and dusty; the flower-beds are but in embryo, and the shrubberies are but half grown. But it promises to be an ornamental acquisition to the town.

On the summit there used to be a statue of Guzman Blanco, President of the Republic. Guzman, although he was careful to line his own pockets well, was a great benefactor to Caraccas; but he was turned out of office, and so his statue has been toppled down after him, and his name and initials erased from all public works. From the foundation on which the statue stood rather a fine panorama of the city and the surrounding country is obtainable.

Disappointed and disgusted with Caraccas, we resolved to fly at the first opportunity. But whither? The next West Indian steamer was not due at La Guayra for a week. We heard of a watering-place about four miles from La Guayra called Macuto. To Macuto we resolved to go. It could not be worse than La Guayra or Caraccas, and, being termed a "watering-place," might be better. So we recrossed the mountains, and a steam tram carried us along the coast to Macuto.

Macuto is beautifully situated amidst palm-trees at the foot of the Caraccas Mountains, which are here, not red and bare as at La Guayra, but clothed with dense foliage, and are split up into romantic ravines down which tumble clear, cold streams to the sea. Nature has done everything to make the place attractive; man has done little or nothing to back her up, and so, for the want of a little enterprise and energy, what might be a really pleasant seaside resort is lifeless and depressing.

Some years back a rich man thought he would enjoy his "otium cum dignitate" on the banks of the little river which dashes down from the hills to the sea. So he started to build a magnificent villa. Unfortunately his funds gave out, the building operations were suspended, and there the villa, or rather the costly skeleton of it, remains. Close to it a company started a fresh-water bathing establishment on a grand scale. This failed, so there is the villa, which is admirably adapted for an hotel, and the baths—all waiting to be thrown into one concern.

"Why waiting?" we ask. "Because," is the reply, "in this, the most flourishing state in South America, no man knows what the morrow may bring forth. To-day is peace; to-morrow all may be riot, and confusion, and anarchy. Who is going to embark upon speculative enterprises under these circumstances?"

There is an hotel at Macuto ; it is called the Casino. As a building it is well enough, although it is a pity that, instead of facing the sea, it looks upon a row of houses of the usual cheerful Venezuelan type. It has a fine open verandah, and a large central ball-room, and a pleasant little tree-planted and fountain-adorned court. But the bedrooms are small and barely furnished ; the beds are simply tightly stretched lengths of canvas ; there is no bath ; the cooking is abominable ; and the sanitary arrangements are of so repulsive a character as to be hardly realisable unless seen. To crown all, the owner is a man whose soul, being wrapped up in music, is very far above attention to the concerns of his property. However, in spite of this, we managed to pass a week away at Macuto pleasantly.

Bathing in the open sea is not deemed safe on account of sharks and barracoutas, but a slice of sea has been enclosed and formed into a bath, and although in a couple of strokes one can go from end to end of it, the fresh, salt waves break in refreshingly over the barrier at the end.

There are pleasant walks, too, up the mountain ravines, by the sides of the tumbling streams, in the midst of luxurious tropical vegetation ; but the atmosphere there being heavy and confined, we preferred the path along the shore, which is bold and rocky. The track, a relic of very old days, passes through villages and groves of mango and palm, and blood-red poinsettia and treacherous manchineel. The sun shines down from a cloudless sky through the arcade of branches overhead ; on the one hand, through gaps in the flower-laden thicket, we get glimpses of expanses of waving, glowing sugar-cane, with here and there a line of cocoa-nut palms bending their graceful heads to the breeze, with the sombre background of mountain, clothed in forest through much of which the foot of man has never passed. On the other hand, through the clumps of manchineel and seaside grape, the wind rushes fresh and strong from the sea, which bursts in magnificent waves upon the rock-strewn beach. Here there is much to remind us of Old Spain—the long trains of laden mules with their tinkling bells ; the picturesque figures of the muleteers ; caballeros, stiff and dignified on horseback ; wayside shrines, at which the faithful kneel ; wayside inns with rude verandahs of palm-leaves, beneath the shade of which women gossip and travellers drink sour wine poured

from goatskins ; mangy dogs and scarecrow chickens ; and, of course, swarms of children.

Most of the travellers we meet do not deign even to look at us, for we British are in ill odour herabouts just now, but the negroes give us "Buenos dias !"

So we passed away the week. With what delight we got into the steam tram and rolled away to La Guayra need not be dwelt upon ; but our troubles were not quite over. We had already paid for the privilege of entering Venezuela ; we were now informed that we had to pay for the luxury of getting out of it. So during the entire morning we were occupied in paying fees and getting documents stamped and signed and sealed, and in dodging about from one stifling, highly-odoured office to another.

As a final worry, we found that the steamer, instead of being alongside the quay, was in mid-harbour, so that we were obliged to hire a boat, and, as there was a very nasty swell setting in, the trip was very unpleasant and not altogether devoid of danger.

At last we were on board the R. M. steamer "Solent." How sweet and fresh and clean everything looked ! How deliciously tasted that first meal ! With what ecstasy we settled ourselves in the cool, cleanly cabin !

We did not even trouble ourselves to take a farewell peep at Venezuela. We had had our peep, and as we steamed swiftly away in the direction of Trinidad, we resolved that it should be through no recommendation of ours that any innocent traveller should be beguiled away from Charles Kingsley's Earthly Paradise, Trinidad, to see, at any rate, that part of Venezuela in which is situated the "fine old Spanish city of Caraccas."

WHITE CAMELLIAS.

WHITER than any whitest rose,
And cold as lone, untrodden snows
On far-off mountain-peak,
I hold the blossom in my hand ;
In language I can understand,
Its waxen petals speak.

She dropped it, moving through the dance,
With cold, slight smile, and steady glance
Of clear, far-seeing eyes ;
It fell full softly at my feet ;
With eager eye and heart a-beat
I stooped to grasp the prize.

The guests have vanished one by one,
The lights are quenched, the music done,
And I sit here apart.
Now, wherefore am I sad to-night ?
I had my fill of proud delight,
What ails thee, O my heart ?

What ails thee thus to make a moan,
 Since I have won her for my own,
 Henceforth to have and hold?
 Hath she not beauty for a dower?
 Is she not perfect as this flower?
 Yea—but the flower is cold.

Is she not white as angels are,
 Smiling like some fair lonely star
 At life's bewilderment?
 Breathing, apart from common cares,
 Like this white flower, exotic airs?
 Yea—but the flower lacks scent.

I love her, and she is mine own,
 Yet, as I sit to-night alone,
 Some subtle joy I miss;
 Upon her truth I rest secure.
 Her heart is proud, her soul is pure,
 But where is love's fond bliss?

If I should sorrow, would she creep
 Into my arms and softly weep
 Till I was comforted?
 If I fell fainting by the way,
 Would she find words of hope to say,
 And raise my drooping head?

If I should sin, would she draw near
 In her white robes, and own me dear
 In wrong as well as right?
 Would she sit with me in the dust
 Of shame, and speak with love's own trust,
 Of noonday after night?

I know not. I—how should I know?
 I think Heaven fashioned her of snow,
 So pure she is, so cold;
 Her life seems rounded hour by hour,
 Compact as this pale, scentless flower,
 Complete without love's gold,
 Complete without love's sweet perfume.
 The shadows lighten in the room,
 And morn is breaking grey.
 I lay the blossom out of sight;
 What cometh, anguish or delight,
 With life's swift-dawning day?

MY FRIENDLY JAP.

A STORY IN TWO CHAPTERS. CHAPTER II.

WHAT I did was to go back to my room and shut myself in for the night, resolving that I would face the problem fairly and squarely. Had I not better intimate to the young lady herself firmly, but at the same time delicately, that—what—what, indeed, was I to say?

Ought I to tell her that I was no longer to be trusted; that, now that my pet dog theory was destroyed, it was no longer seemly, nor indeed safe, for us to continue our present unconventional relations? No, that would never do. I felt I could never even begin. Yet, fancy if by any chance our intimacy were to be misconstrued as Englefield had suggested, and some, if not all, of those darker possibilities were to ensue! I had not cared to own it to Englefield, but already I had both seen and heard quite enough of Japanese ideas of justice, of their contempt for human life, and of their summary methods of revenge, to cause me to

entertain considerable qualms as to the result.

However, there was no harm done as yet; so for the time I gave the problem up and went to sleep.

In the morning, by the light of another day, the outlook was entirely changed. The sun was bright, the air fresh, and I could laugh at Englefield and his premonishment of woe. He must surely have been funning, and I—had taken him seriously. The whole affair was too ridiculous altogether, from my initial blunder down to his most Cassandra-like forecasts of the night before. Still, one might as well be careful. There might be something in what he had said as to the girl's relations. With regard to herself, there was nothing, absolutely, to fear. She was such a child; a frank, affectionate child, with an unconventional style of manifesting her regard which, now I remembered it, caused me to blush for my stupidity.

I next wondered if she could be as young as I had always thought. Might not much of her supposed childishness arise from that characteristic lightness of heart so peculiar to her race, and from the enforced simplicity of her language? A vocabulary restricted to the simplest words in sentences modelled on those of "The Child's First Reader," might easily prove misleading by obscuring any underlying maturity of thought. Poor little Fido! How could I possibly warn her without hurting her feelings? Yet something must be done. It was one thing to have had a supposed child, and that child a boy, always at hand to minister to one's more material wants, or amuse one with his naïve and irresponsible chatter; but a full-grown girl was different entirely, and it must not be allowed to go on. Still, it was a pity, for we had entertained each other wonderfully well, and were getting on so fast with each other's language; but this discovery made all the difference in the world, and somehow I should have to warn her to keep away.

But where was she? Always it had been her habit to wait on me at breakfast herself, whereas now, though all was laid ready, there was no Fido to smile and coo pleasantly round me and invite me to partake.

No, there was no Fido on that day nor yet the next, and in spite of my severely virtuous mood, I began to miss her—to wish that at least she had waited to be told. But here she had taken the initiative, and I had to eat my meals alone.

She was not ill, for I had caught sight of her flitting about the garden; then what could it mean, this sudden and voluntary change in all our habits? Could she, by any chance, have overheard what Englefield had said, and how I—— But here my ears tingled again as I thought of my almost inconceivable stupidity. How she and her friends would laugh, thought I, more sensitively alive to the possibility of their ridicule than even the chaff of my English friends.

But she did not laugh when we met face to face next day. Rather did she look at me shyly and askance, with the deprecatory appeal of a pet spaniel in disgrace, and I was obliged to take her by the hand, else she would have slipped away.

We were in the garden, and she stood there, a not unpleasing picture, in her quaint dress, leaning against an intricate and elaborately carved trellis, with a superb giant azalea by way of background. Then, too, there was a suspicious moisture about her eyes, and she looked so entirely changed from the light-hearted, seeming child of a few days before, that more and more did I marvel at myself. Nor would she say what had kept her away, until, aided by a chance word, I found quite as I feared that she had overheard and understood the most of what Englefield and I had said; had heard, therefore, my own strenuous disclaimers of all interest in her except as a distraction and an amusing companion; and her pride had been sorely hurt, and——

But there, what was I to do? She had been so consistently kind, that I could but try to soothe her and assure her how entirely she was mistaken, and in face of her undisguised delight and restored self-respect, beg of her—spite of all my admonisher had said—to resume our old manner of life.

But it was not the same. Try as I would, the old perfect simplicity and entire unconsciousness was lost, and could not be restored. Englefield's words were constantly recurring to me and sounding the death-knell, one by one, of all our old relations. I was restless, uneasy, nor able to justify myself in permitting little familiarities, innocent enough before, but now so altogether changed. No, the serpent had entered our paradise, and no longer was this right, while the constraint I felt reflected itself in Fido, whose smile soon grew less spontaneous and more rare, to presently die away altogether.

The trouble came about in this wise.

My host, after the custom of Japan, had arranged a marriage for his daughter with a young man of her own class—a warrior and a wearer of the double-handed sword. But she, far from falling in with his plans after the docile fashion of her race, had first temporised, and then flatly refused the proposed alliance altogether. Whereupon there arose a tremendous pother and pow-wow. Such insubordination was most unusual, hence was the excitement proportionately great. The fair one was obdurate, and the parents, at first perplexed, became eventually stern and peremptory under a provocation so rare as to be well-nigh unprecedented.

It is quite conceivable that after a struggle more or less prolonged, matters might have arranged themselves, and the affair have been quietly adjusted, had not a letter I received from home served unfortunately to precipitate the crisis.

The summons was both urgent and unexpected. I was called away, and was obliged forthwith to break the news of my impending departure to my host and his daughter, and then it was that the mischief first began.

With my room all in confusion—I was busy packing—and a medley of trunks and portmanteaux and their intended contents covering the floor from end to side, I was interrupted by a visitor—Fido herself.

That she had been weeping was only too clear. Too deeply moved for concealment or pretence, she laid her hand on my arm to say:

"You—you go away?"

"Yes," I answered, "I am obliged to go;" to be startled by the prompt rejoinder:

"Yes, yes; I go too. You take me with you."

"But—your father!" I stammered, aghast before the suddenness of the emergency. "He will object—will not let you go."

"No—he not willing; but I go, allee same."

"But your family, your friends. It is a long, long way. Just think what would you do—so far away, and alone among strangers?"

"Not all strange. I go with you."

"But—I cannot take you. You—you cannot live with me. It would not be——" But here I stopped, painfully conscious of my dilemma. How was I to make her understand—about propriety, and Mrs. Grundy, and—yes, about Ellen,

who was waiting for me on the other side?

"Oh, yes—all right! I live with you. If you like, I be your servant; but no stay here when you are gone."

And the great salt tears trickled down the sides of her innocent little nose.

I felt dreadfully sorry and even more ashamed, though why I scarcely knew, for how was I to blame? Still, if I had known—but what in the world was I to do? How make her understand?

And while I hesitated, there entered the father, no longer smiling, but looking suspicious and annoyed.

He glanced from one to the other, at once irate and perplexed; then at the signs of imminent departure with very obvious relief.

"Ah!" he grunted. "You go away plenty quick!" thereby echoing his daughter's words; then added, "You not be here for the—the wedding."

I assented, adding that I should be far enough away before that auspicious event occurred, to which, however, I avoided more direct reference.

"Ah! fine time—fine man—fine—everything," and he rambled on, plainly talking "at" his rebellious daughter.

"Yes," I echoed. "It would be a very fine time, no doubt."

By way of diversion I took up a present I had already prepared, and begged his permission to offer it, English fashion, to the prospectively happy pair.

He took it for his daughter, who had slipped away, and thanked me gravely but without effusion. Then finding we were alone, he whispered:

"She too much young and plenty foolish. Not know what she want or what good; but marry—then soon all right."

With which sentiment, the wish being plainly father to the thought, I cordially agreed, and went on with my work.

The next scene in the little drama was very short, but I found it sufficiently dramatic, though I hardly realised its full import at the time.

Briefly, then, I had paid all my duty calls, had said my last "good-byes," and in a native "ricksha" was being hurried down to the boat, my luggage having already been sent on board.

I was just a little anxious about the time, having driven it rather fine, and finding our progress impeded by the crowd, I paid off my "Kuruma-san" in order to make my way by a short cut the last few yards on foot.

It would be a near thing, I knew, but I should manage it, I decided; and the little street—or rather passage—was so quiet that I almost ran along, to find myself the next moment face to face with a party of Japanese, whose appearance from a neighbouring doorway promptly barred my passage, while so sudden was our encounter that the drawn sword of the leader almost touched my breast before, half-mechanically, I sprang aside, scarcely noticing the friendly arm that had interposed to brush the keen-edged blade aside.

It was a narrow escape, and I was safely past them, and all was over before one could well have counted ten; and after a short run I jumped into the boat waiting for me at the quay-side, then turned to see what had become of my assailants. There they were still, all three of them, and—was it possible?—yes, there was the fourth—my saviour, who appeared to have thrown himself directly across their path and effectually prevented all pursuit. Himself, did I say? Well, I could not be altogether sure. And before I could look again, or satisfy the new doubt which, together with the reaction after my sudden excitement, had left me feeling rather faint and sick, the men had pushed off, and I was being helped up the steamer's side.

Was it indeed "Fido," my friendly Jap, faithful to the last, who had rescued me or not? I wondered, but without any possibility of arriving at a definite conclusion; though the more I debated the point the more I was inclined to think it was. However, rescued I had been, and after an uneventful voyage I landed in England, full of gratitude and safe and sound.

Once at home and I fell into my place quickly enough, and before very long Ellen and I were married, and were as entirely foolish, and more than as happy, as the majority of men and women at that delightfully "silly season" of their lives.

Needless, perhaps, to say, at such a time the memory of "Fido" and Japan had faded almost entirely from my mind, until the opening of the Japanese Village in London served to remind me not unpleasantly of both.

Naturally enough Ellen wished to go, and go alone with me. She must be "personally conducted," and have it all explained by one who had seen them in their "native lair" and knew something at least of their native "lingo"; must hear with her own ears that I could make my-

self really understood, and not, as in Paris, find myself driven in despair to fall back upon the grinning English waiter.

So, again quite naturally, we went, and, the honeymoon not having waned, we did the show after a lazy and altogether perfunctory fashion of our own, which led us to sit about in quiet corners, "the world forgetting," but not by any means "by the world forgot"; as we found when we woke up to consciousness of the many glances, either scoffing or sympathetic, that were turned in our direction.

Then it was that, being nothing if not original, we straightway resolved to go to the other extreme, and behave "quite as though we were old married people."

Ellen should go alone and get herself a cup of tea, while I—well, I would stroll about and we would meet again, say, in a quarter of an hour; so, after carefully comparing watches, I started off on my solitary tour.

Dear Ellen, what a sweet, delightful girl she was, to be sure, ran the burden of my song; and what a lucky, undeserving dog was I! I lounged along, too absorbed in my own happiness to notice what was going on around.

I was still engrossed, passing in review a whole twelvemonth of uninterrupted bliss, and was smiling to myself at the memory of the Dunmow Fitch, when I was startled by a sudden inarticulate cry of delighted recognition, felt a hand laid gently on my arm, and, when I looked round, sure enough it was Fido—poor little Fido—with the tears of joy streaming from her eyes, and laughing and sobbing all in a breath.

Poor little Fido! My heart sank, and I glanced round involuntarily to find we were alone, or if not alone, there was no one near who knew me, I concluded, with, perhaps, an over-obvious relief.

The hand was promptly withdrawn, and the voice sobbed out:

"You not know me—not glad to see me?"

"Not know you? Why, of course I do, and I am—very glad. Why should I not be?" I answered quickly, at the same time taking both her hands reassuringly in mine, and, "Why not, indeed?" I repeated to myself more than once; while Fido went on to tell how she had taken the opportunity afforded by the coming of certain friends to London to place herself under their charge all unknown to her father, whose consent she had made no pretence of asking. Indeed, the same might

be said as to the friends on whose generosity she had thrown herself after leaving port as a kind of modified though solvent stowaway, at an hour such as effectually forbade all question of return, thus leaving them no responsibility of deciding as to whether she should go or stay.

This much I learned, but with difficulty; for owing to the excitement of our sudden meeting, her English was more broken and her Japanese more fluent than I had ever known them before. Nor was I so tranquilly receptive as to favour a speedier mutual understanding.

What time I was listening to her moving tale and duly sympathising therewith, I was busy speculating as to how best to meet the farther difficulties that were evidently far from suggesting themselves to my companion, who, I could see, innocently assumed that now we had met, all her troubles were at an end; whereas mine, I feared, were only just beginning, for my wife might turn up at any moment and find us together, and—what was I to tell her? The truth, of course; but "what was the truth to be?"

Ellen certainly was the dearest girl in all the world, and we were so tremendously happy just then that—really, what ought I to do?

I had suffered such unpleasantness and had run the gauntlet of so much unbelieving chaff from Englefield and the rest with reference to Fido and my mistake, that I had thought it far the wiser course, on my return, to avoid all mention of the incident beyond, perhaps, a casual reference to the fact of my native host having had daughters. Not to mention the matter then had appeared the easiest way out of the difficulty. Now, however, not having spoken of it was in itself the trouble.

Now that I was married I ought to invite her to my house. So much, hospitality clearly demanded. But how would Ellen like a previously unheard-of Japanese young lady quartered indefinitely upon us? For that she had no intention of going back was quickly made apparent. If only I had been open and told Ellen all about her before, she might have taken kindly to the little thing, who was so young and far from home, and so greatly in need of kindness and protection, but whose very innocence and impulsiveness made it impossible to forecast what she might do next.

All this and more I thought, with one ear open to Fido's innocent prattle, and the other listening for my wife's return;

my divided attention having its effect on my companion, whom alternately it chilled and reassured.

But I might have spared both myself and her. Long before I had laid my plans, Ellen reappeared, and far from being jealous—an absurdity of which, under the circumstances, I might surely have known she was incapable—after hearing my explanation, she, too, fell into my original error and treated Fido as the merest child, so that, after I had introduced them and told of the many obligations I was under, she it was who suggested inviting the stranger to our home. And I, though conscious of her mistake, weakly allowed it to pass as offering the readiest way out of my dilemma. Nor, in my relief, did I notice Fido's change of manner; or, if I did, I set it down to a shyness which would wear off when my wife and she grew better friends. With that, after explaining our intention to those supposed to have Fido in charge—who it appeared knew me quite well, but whom, owing to my ridiculous infirmity, I failed to recognise—we left for home in a cab.

I really thought I had done wisely in leaving Ellen to her first impression, for under its influence she treated our visitor much as I had done myself, and at once made of her quite a pet; any little want of accord between fact and fancy being accounted for as differences of race and habit.

But Fido I noticed was greatly changed. She was as entirely docile and tractable as ever, but had lost all her old frank and winning ways; had grown strangely thoughtful—at times even moody and abstracted—so much so as to lead my wife to suppose her homesick.

With this, accordingly, she taxed her, and in her well-meant efforts to reconcile her to her stay, reminded her how, in about a week, the exhibition would be over, when she would soon be on her way back to the home and friends she must be longing so to see.

At which reminder Fido seemed unaccountably surprised and more distressed than ever. She appeared as though about to speak, but stopped to glance after a shy and almost appealing fashion at me, leaving me suddenly doubtful as to the entire wisdom of my plan, and as to whether, after all, further complications might not even yet be left in store.

But, no; beyond growing still more shy and developing a tendency—so Ellen told

me—to disappear and be found in odd corners with her eyes full of tears, or gazing dreamily, and Ellen feared somewhat drearily, out of windows, without ever being able to speak of what she saw, the week passed over peacefully enough. Almost too quietly, although we tried all we knew to make it pleasant by taking her to such theatres or sights as were at all likely to interest her; but all without effect.

Always when asked would she answer: "Oh, yes; it was nice—so nice; she was much pleased," but not as though her heart were in it, and always was she glad to get home and rest, for—she was so tired. She who at home had flitted about unwearingly the whole day long was always tired, until Ellen grew anxious about her health, and whispered that London must not suit her, and that she should indeed be glad for her to go back to her own home and her native air. While I—well, I, too, was ill at ease, for that something was wrong was only too clear. Gone was all the old innocent abandon, all the lightness of heart; and gone, too, all the merry little ways, while sometimes I would turn and meet an expression in her eyes which made my heart ache; and I, too, thought she would be far better at home.

Ellen and I went down to the boat to see her off, after a touching scene in which the poor "child," as my wife still called her, insisted on giving her everything she had with her in the way of trinket or ornament, leaving herself entirely destitute of both, the while she refused firmly, and with a curious settled obstinacy, to take any present, however trifling, in return. Nor would she explain why. "No, indeed no," was all she would say, pushing whatever was offered her aside—she should not need them where she was going, which was her excuse also for parting with her own things. And the singularity of the excuse or reason left me with a strange, haunting dread, for which I could not account, but thought it better to conceal; for what, indeed, could she mean? The last we saw of her was a still, lifeless-looking face, with little more of expression on it than has a mask, but with a terrible sadness latent in the eyes, which I, at all events, shall never quite forget, as she stood there quietly unresponsive, gazing back at us over the side as we waved our encouraging farewells, and the vessel bore her smoothly but inexorably from our sight.

That was the last I ever saw of "my friendly Jap." At odd times—mostly those still and sleepless watches of the night, when one's memory serves only to reproach—I have wondered whether I were in any way to blame; but there, poor little Fido! I have told you all I know—more than ever I have told my wife.

ELLEN'S POSTSCRIPT.

I nevertheless both saw and understood more than you supposed, but, let us hope wisely, held my peace.

Poor little Fido indeed! I, too, was troubled to let her leave us so; but what could we do?

Later, I read the paragraph subjoined in an English paper posted from Japan. I destroyed the paper for fear my husband should see it.

"When the P. & O. steamer 'Chimborazo' arrived in Yokohama yesterday, having on board the natives who so lately inhabited the Japanese Village in London, her captain reported the loss overboard, in mid-ocean, of a young Japanese girl of good family, whose name unfortunately our reporter could not learn. What makes the affair peculiarly distressing is that from the statement of those who had the young lady in charge, she left her home in Japan unknown to her parents and friends, who were anxiously looking forward to her return. It would appear that she was in the habit of staying on deck until long after the others had retired, and it is supposed that owing to a sudden lurch of the vessel she must have fallen overboard, though the captain reports the passage as exceptionally calm. From the time she was first missed nothing was ever seen or heard of her again."

No, nothing was ever seen or heard of her again. And my husband does not even know that she is dead. I, too, sometimes have wondered— But there—poor little Fido!—she alone could have told.

THE LATE MRS. VERNON.

By A. MOBERLY.

Author of "Lady Valeria," etc., etc.

CHAPTER I.

A STRAY September sunbeam found its way into the school-room one morning. It was the first I had ever seen there, and

I stopped in my work of clearing away books and slates to blink at it with as much disfavour as any owl. I didn't want it there, dancing all over the dingy wall, impertinently illuminating dirt and discomfort, and making shabbiness tenfold shabbier—the shabbiness of things new and old; the respectable shabbiness of age and wear in the second, third, and fourth-hand furniture, and elsewhere the squalid deterioration that comes of bad material and scamped workmanship. Blotchy new paper peeled off damp new plaster, cracks gaped in the crooked mantel-shelf, the door wouldn't stay shut, and the window wouldn't stay open, the spring-blind wouldn't draw down, and the trumpery ormolu gaseller wouldn't stay up.

I knew it by heart; the stains and ink-spatters, the scraps of paper, clippings of dress-stuffs, and crumbs from the last children's meal, the fireless grate piled high with litter, and the dust dancing in little whirlpools under Bertie's bed in the corner when the door swayed in the draught. I knew it all and hated it, or would have done so had I not by long persistence made myself blind to it.

It was an unbeautiful spot, but all the home I had; this, with a corner of the attic overhead, which I shared with Lulu and Tottie, and a great stack of their mother's basket trunks and Major Tarrant's portman-teaux. I had no wish to quarrel with it. My life during the long seven years that I had spent with the Tarrants had been lived in similarly unattractive quarters, the back regions of smart second-rate lodgings, and I knew nothing better. With each one of our countless moves I had conscientiously made a fresh beginning, scrubbed and dusted, pinned up pictures from the "Graphic" and "Illustrated," and spent my few spare shillings on gasmen and window-cleaners; but exhausted by the unequal struggle, invariably ended by resigning myself to the casual good offices of the overworked general servant, content if I could only keep my immediate belongings fairly decent. No wonder I felt small gratitude towards that intrusive sunbeam for needlessly emphasizing my latest failure.

It gave better light for my work, that was one advantage. Our morning's lessons were over, but the real business of the day had yet to commence. I propped the untrustworthy window open with the French dictionary, drew the sewing-machine forward, and got out my work-basket.

How green and rubbed the sleeves of my black cashmere were growing, and that crack in the side of my shoe was getting bigger! I knew I was dingy and faded enough to be in perfect keeping with my surroundings, but I didn't care to be reminded of the fact.

As I took the cover off the sewing-machine two of my little pupils trotted in—stylish young persons, in elaborately-smocked frocks and Liberty hats. They were small and stunted for their ages, but by dint of careful dressing and much display of fair, severely crimped hair, passed for “sweet little creatures” with an indiscriminating public. Both were equipped with spades and buckets, and Tottie, moreover, carried her big india-rubber ball. Tottie's big ball and big blue innocent eyes had been useful in effecting many desirable introductions before this.

“Not gone yet, children?” I asked.

“We were waiting to see which way the St. Maur children were going to-day, and I've been trying to make Bertie tidy. He's put on his clean suit and his best hat, but he wouldn't let me wash him, and he's very sticky. He's been helping cook. He says nobody ever notices him, and he has promised to keep his hands in his pockets if we meet any one we know; they are very black.”

“Oh, and please, Miss Margison, Algy is lost. He took the greengrocer's basket and dropped all the potatoes over the cliff, and then said he was going to run away to Nurse Jane at the camp; but we think he went to the harbour. Do you s'pose he'll be killed?”

“No, I don't; but that's cook's business, not mine. He'll be home in time for dinner, I dare say.”

I should personally have been quite resigned to Algy's being lost for an indefinite period—spoilt little wretch!

“Now run away. Use your handkerchief, Tottie, and turn your toes out.”

“Good-bye, dear Miss Margison. I wish you were coming,” and with graceful little nods of farewell they departed.

They were always polite, or, when necessary, affectionate. They had no childish vices. They never fought, or romped, or flew into passions, and were sharp as needles over their lessons. They seldom played of their own initiative, but were always ready to join others, if the others were desirable acquaintances, and seldom or never cried. Tottie certainly had wailed gently for five minutes last week; but that was in the

drawing-room, when old Colonel Sampleton called to say good-bye, and she got a pound of chocolate creams and a gold bangle as a reward of the performance, much to Lulu's disgust.

A distant surge of the sea, stray notes of a military band and the voices of promenaders without, drifted in through the open window. The sunbeam seemed to have brought them all in its train for my special disturbance. Why could I not have been left in peace with the reposeful view of our neighbour's blank brick wall and the society of the ghostly shrouded dress-stand in the corner, attired in Mrs. Tarrant's new blue serge costume pinned up in newspapers? A “panel” of scarlet cloth and a waistcoat to match, both covered with endless rows of gold braid, lay awaiting completion in my work-basket.

I had certainly never covenanted to make Mrs. Tarrant's dresses when she engaged me as governess, nor yet to act as nurse, hairdresser, and, on an emergency, cook and tailoress, yet I had found myself fulfilling all these functions in the course of the years during which I had followed the fortunes of the Tarrants from one military station to another.

It was too late in the day for me to be fastidious. The qualifications for a governess which had served seven years ago were of little use now. I had had no chance of keeping up with modern methods of teaching, no array of certificates to display, not even a high-class reference to give. I was out of the race for a living; Mrs. Tarrant knew it as well as I did, and made her profit out of the knowledge.

Stopping to rest my eyes I raised them to the opposite wall. The sunbeam had travelled round there. I think it was reflected from a swinging lattice high up in the opposite house which some one at that moment shut, for it gave a final flash and disappeared. The flash shot across a date-card marked “September Fifth,” and thence, so it seemed, straight into my unwilling brain, pouring its unwelcome light on all the grey, dismal store of recollections there as it had illumined the squalid dreariness of my actual outward surroundings. My birthday! And I was thirty!

It came to me with no memory of gift or greeting. In all the long, lonely years of my life I had never been wished a happy return of the day, nor had wished it for myself. It was only marked for me as the day on which, seven years ago, ah, forlorn, helpless, and ignorant of the

world's ways as any nun driven from her cloister, I left school to begin life for myself as governess at Major Tarrant's. It must have been in answer to some question of Baby Bertie's that I had let the date escape me, to hear it, with horror, retailed to the assembled family at luncheon.

"Miss Margison's birthday, is it?" echoed Major Tarrant in his rasping voice. "She's not expecting a present, I hope. No followers and no perquisites—those are the rules of my establishment. Haw! haw!" and the Major laughed noisily at his own facetiousness, while I, shrinking with shyness, made a mental resolve to make no more personal admissions.

Major Tarrant was big, loud, and bad-mannered, but not unkindly by nature. Going upstairs to my room after dinner, I heard his harsh voice below me in the hall answering, it would seem, some joking expostulation of his wife's.

"Hurt her feelings, did I? Stuff and nonsense! Better to have a clear understanding at once and for ever. Perhaps she was a little low, too—poor wretch. Here, Bertie, here's half-a-crown. Go and buy her a present—from yourself. Tell Jane to take you out," and the Major tramped off, slamming the door.

"Give it to mother, Bertie darling, and we'll go and choose a pretty thing together;" and that was the last I heard of it. Once Mrs. Tarrant's fingers closed on anything they were apt to hold it tight.

She was a plump, childish-looking little creature, with a very small waist, to which she alluded three times a day on an average, neutral-tinted hair and complexion, a noisy voice, and a caressing, kittenish manner contradicted by the expression of two hard little blue eyes, anxious, mean, and greedy. The gods had gifted her with unbounded impudence and imperturbable good-temper, unmarred by the workings of either heart or conscience.

She was mortally afraid of her husband, who was a severe disciplinarian, and regulated the household himself down to its minutest details—luckily for us. He used to audit the accounts nightly, and wring his wife's greedy, pleasure-loving soul by sternly refusing her a penny beyond her regular allowance, and permitting no debts. She would laugh good-temperedly always, and sometimes give up the desired new gown or party of pleasure, but not often. The nursery supply of butter

would be mysteriously stopped for a week, or the children's washing-bills be cut down one-half, and the Major certainly was none the wiser.

She was great at finance. I knew that she contrived to screw double the worth of my pay out of me every day, and I found a grim enjoyment in watching her treat every one within reach in the same fashion, from the last joined subaltern who was permitted to lose a dozen pairs of gloves to her on the garrison steeple-chase, or bank with her at "penny nap," to the elderly veteran who was induced to drop the smallest coin he had about him into Lulu's missionary-box.

She had never treated me rudely, or with anything but the kindest, almost sisterly consideration. Pleasant words and caressing ways cost nothing, and sometimes bear interest. She always made me come in to her afternoon teas, and went the length of lending me small bits of decoration for the occasion. I accepted her civilities as I should have done her neglect, with the same dull indifference that passed with me in those days for contentment. Nothing in the years we spent together ever drew me closer to her. Not the long, tedious illness through which I nursed her faithfully, nor the baby life which I tended and strove to preserve for her. I know she only regarded me as a valuable possession, not to be abused, but to be used to the utmost and thrown away when done with, and I owed her no grudge for the knowledge. I think my one active personal sentiment in those days was a hard secret pride in piling up service on service as a debt which she could never pay.

Not a good or a wholesome state of mind, as that morning I became aware for the first time. Was it the sunbeam's doing that a new vague unrest stirred within me, that I began to look back on my life from the standpoint of my present experience, questioning how far I might have moulded it differently, how far I had been the blindfold slave of circumstance?

My life. A pitiful retrospect. In its earliest beginnings I could recall no mother, no home, no childhood. I had a father—sometimes a smart, spruce father, with a cigar in his mouth, his hat on one side, and a flower in his buttonhole; sometimes a shabby, sleepy, unkempt father, thick of speech and surly of temper. I have dim recollections of long journeys and late suppers; of inns, and of chambermaids, kind or cross as the case might be, putting

me to bed; of excursion trains, noisy streets, shouting men, and a general atmosphere of race-week, stable talk, bets, and bad language.

Then suddenly I see myself perched on a tall chair, swinging my small legs and staring straight into Aunt Hitty's face—a sharp, kindly old face, looking out of a close net cap-border with a pair of keen, spectacled eyes that examine me from head to foot so searchingly that mine, in confusion, wander away round the stuffy little room, with its scant, well-preserved furniture, its row of black silhouette portraits over the mantelpiece, the piping bullfinch in its cage, and the three fat, blind puppies sprawling over their fat mother in a basket on the rug. A gaunt, surly maid, standing bolt upright behind my aunt's chair, embarrasses me still more by the sniffs and snorts of disparagement she gives at intervals, directed pointedly at me or my father, who lounges on the shiny horse-hair sofa, twirling his cane and pointing out my merits in an airy, dispassionate manner.

"A good, handy little thing. Shouldn't wonder if she grows up pretty. Clever, too, if she had any teaching. I can't keep her any longer, that's certain, at any rate."

"We can't do with another here," pronounces the maid decidedly. "Where's she to sleep?"

"Poor Bessie's child. All the kin I've got, Metty," pipes the old lady in the chair. "Dick Margison, th'art a shiftless, feckless ne'er-do-weel. I'll do nowt for thee. She mun go to school. I'll pay for her, and when I die she'll have all I've got to leave." Then I am let to slide down on the rug and cuddle the puppies.

School, and school, and school. A cheap one first, and then a cheaper when my father died, and his very irregular contributions towards my support finally stopped. I was worked hard by a hard-working mistress, teaching the juniors, learning myself as I could. No time for play, for schoolgirl friendships. Girls came, and went as they came—strangers to me. The masters I learnt from and the children I taught were no more to me than the books and blackboards, part of the school furniture, that was all. Looking back on those years I could see how many little kindnesses I must have received with stupid irresponsiveness. I was pleased and grateful, but didn't know how to show it. I was imposed upon as well now and then, bullied, over-tasked, insulted, but met the

bad as I did the good with the same dull stoicism.

Teach, and teach, and teach. I did my work well and thoroughly, I am sure of that. I stayed on and on, giving good value for a small wage, thankful for food and shelter, too spiritless to ask for anything further, neither glad nor sorry to go when my employer conscientiously insisted on my accepting the Tarrants' offer of an engagement as the best ever likely to fall in my way.

Here my braid ran out suddenly to an end. I jerked it away impatiently. "The best life was able to afford me." I spoke it half aloud, and dropping my hands in my lap looked round me in mute protest. Half my life lived, and what was the outcome? A pile of unfinished work, a row of tattered school-books on the shelf, a few pounds in the Post Office Savings' Bank, and my sole hope for the future, that of clinging to the Tarrants as long as they would keep me, working harder each year and receiving less. After that—Here a hard, high little voice outside suddenly recalled me from the profitless Past and hopeless Future to the pressing claims of the actual Present, and, undoing a fresh hank of braid, I commenced to reel it off on my braider, taking myself hastily to task for my morbid notions. What had come to me? My share of life might be meagre and flavourless, but it had been as much as I had ever desired or deserved. What did I want to change in it? Did I envy Mrs. Tarrant her millinery, her Major, the society of the gilded military youth which she affected? No; a dozen times no; no more than I would change this dismal room for the twopenny halfpenny smartness of her drawing-room, or for the Major's grim orderly den in the basement. Was I such a fool as to pray for my daily bread, and then quarrel with it because the supply of butter sometimes fell short, literally as well as figuratively? Again, not I! And I set my wheel a-going with fresh vigour.

"Oh, you dear, good soul! Are you slaving over that frock instead of getting a little sunshine and fresh air this lovely day?" cried Mrs. Tarrant from the doorway.

She looked as incongruous as the sunbeam as she tripped in amongst the surrounding dinginess in her fresh grey costume, with a pink satin waistcoat, and a sailor hat with a pink ribbon poised on her sleek little head.

"You kind creature! Do you think you can really get it done for me to wear to-morrow at the polo match? You needn't trouble about the children's afternoon lessons if you think you can. I've asked dear old Nurse Jane to come to tea with them. She does so enjoy seeing her boy Algy, and I know she'll get the panel in if you'll do the vest. It makes her so happy doing anything for us."

I assented without enthusiasm to an afternoon of dressmaking with Nurse Jane, who had married a soldier at the camp, and was honoured now and then with an invitation to come over and make herself useful.

Mrs. Tarrant watched me for a minute or so; then suddenly broke out:

"What do you think my husband has done? Such an absurd blunder! He was writing me a cheque to-day, and went and made it payable to you. I said he needn't worry; it would be all right. You will only have to endorse it, you know."

"Why didn't he tear it up and write another?" I asked in my stupid way.

"Oh, I don't know. He might have come to the end of his cheque-book, perhaps, and the bank isn't open to-day, you know. However, you can make it all right directly. Just put your name there."

She laid the slip before me with her small grey-gloved finger-tip on a particular spot. I got the blotting-paper out and lifted the ink down very deliberately. Major Tarrant's blunder puzzled me, and I wanted to think about it. Why should he have put my name instead of his wife's?

It could not have been intended for me, I assured myself as I tried the nib of my pen; he had paid me yesterday, and I had cashed the cheque an hour after. The money, seven pounds ten, was in my pocket at the moment. It must have been a blunder; nothing but the irritable capacious mood that I was in could make me doubt it.

"Will you let me see how my name is filled in, if you please?" I asked, pushing her finger away. She resisted for a second—only for a second—just long enough to let me feel that she did resist. I turned the paper.

"Elizabeth H. Margison," I read in the Major's clear, crooked script, "the sum of seven pounds ten." My quarter's salary. It was an odd coincidence.

"Of course it couldn't have been meant for me!" I asked, writing "Elizabeth"

very carefully, and then stopping to look up at her.

Her twinkling little blue eyes met mine, and then twinkled away again. She laughed as if I had made a little joke.

"Be quick, there's a dear; Captain Fanshaw is waiting for me."

I laughed in return.

"It's a quarter's salary. You might intend to give me notice," I answered, and went on writing; but, even as I spoke, sundry floating rumours, scraps of children's talk, and chance words of servants' gossip rushed into my mind and for the first time took intelligible meaning.

"I have written 'Howarth' in full. Will that matter?"

"Not a bit. Do be quick; I've left the children all to themselves."

"Is it true that Major Tarrant is going to the Cape?" I demanded, carefully forming the second loop of my "M."

"No, of course not—not in the least likely."

"Then where is he going?"

I stopped to get a hair out of my pen as I asked.

"Going? Oh, to the Marquesas, I suppose, if he goes anywhere. His cousin, Sir Algy Tarrant, wants to take him as military secretary. There, you've broken your pen, wiping it so hard. Take another."

"Shall you go with him?"

I was hunting in my box of nibs, and spoke carelessly.

"Of course I shall. It's a capital appointment, and I shall be the only lady on the staff. Sir Algy will be glad to get me to play hostess at Government House."

She straightened her little waist complacently.

"And what shall you arrange about me?"

"How can I tell when I don't know myself?" She tapped the table impatiently. "How long do you mean to keep me? I'll let you know as soon as I do myself—in good time, you may be sure. You shall have your month's notice."

"A quarter's, if you please. That was the agreement."

"A quarter's? Oh dear, no! I remember perfectly. I told you what uncertain lives we poor military wretches lead. How could we afford to give you three months' salary for nothing?"

"I think Major Tarrant intended doing so, nevertheless," I said, looking steadily at her. "Yes, I really think this cheque was intended for me. Let me go and ask

him. I hear him talking to Captain Fanshaw in the hall."

"No; I'll go, if it will satisfy you. Give me the cheque."

I handed it over. She picked it up, looked first into the unfinished signature and then into my face. She was as near to losing her temper as she had ever been in her life.

"Perhaps you would rather see him yourself, though. I've no doubt you think you could get it out of him if you ask prettily enough."

Her eyes seemed to snap a spark of spite as she threw the cheque down before me. I paid no attention. I had taken out a sheet of letter paper and was neatly writing out a receipt, which I stamped and signed and dated in silence.

"How soon do you wish me to go?"

"We've got the Wadsworths to take this house off our hands from the end of next week," she said, sulky, but unabashed. "You will have to stay behind and do the inventory, and give the house up to them. Major Tarrant is going up to-morrow about his outfit."

"And the children?"

"Oh, we shall send the girls off to their grandmother. Major Tarrant will take them down when he goes to say good-bye to her. She won't like it, so we shan't tell her they are coming. She can't well refuse then. Bertie will go to school with Bob and Archie, and I'm sure Nurse Jane will like to have Algy for a few weeks till we can settle him somewhere. Major Tarrant is worrying to take him with us."

She shrugged her shoulders, and looked comically resigned. She was quite her serene self again by this time.

"What do you think? I'm off to Paris next Tuesday. Mrs. Crofton wants some one to go with her, as she can't speak a word of French. I can shop for her and take care of her, you know. So we shall all be disposed of. I'll leave a list of what I want to have done before the Wads-

worths come in. You shall have a charwoman to help you, of course. I'm sure you'll enjoy the rest."

Then she adjusted her draperies, tried different effects with the braid, and tripped away airily.

I sat by myself, working steadily for an hour or two more. The cheque lay on the table, and I glanced at it now and then with wonder, and a grim satisfaction in my own newly-discovered audacity.

What a chance it had been for her! Unless I had been thoroughly roused I should never have dared to claim it. I could see myself meekly pocketing my two pounds ten in lieu of a month's notice, and the balance would have come in so usefully for her in Paris. Poor disappointed little woman, I could afford to pity her.

And myself? It took me some little time to realise that I was from that moment absolutely cut adrift for the first time in my life. What was I to do? Where was I to go? I had heard of governesses' homes in London. I must find one, and get placed as soon as possible. Old Aunt Hitty was still alive, but I could expect nothing more from her. She had spent all her small savings on my education, and had made her will, leaving me sole heiress of her few possessions. Her faithful maid was dead, and she now lived with some kind neighbours with whom her small income just kept her in comfort, but would stretch no farther. I was alone in the world, absolutely alone, and dependent on my own resources from henceforth.

It was an odd, abrupt ending to seven years of faithful service; but the only natural one, as I admitted, with stern justice. I had put no love into the labour, why should I expect any with the wages?

Meanwhile, as I thought I stitched, and stitched, and the blue and scarlet serge was finished to time.

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PRICE TWOPENCE.

MISS LATIMER OF BRYANS.

By ELEANOR C. PRICE.

Author of "Alexia," "Red Towers," "The Little One," etc.

CHAPTER VII. ARTHUR.

HOWEVER, in other ways, Poppy and Arthur Nugent might be suited or unsuited to each other, there was no denying that they possessed a good deal of beauty between them. In some people's eyes Arthur Nugent was not strong enough to be an ideally handsome man; his good looks were of a delicate, refined sort. He was fair and slight; his hair, already rather thin, grew far back from a bare, pale forehead. There was almost an odd effect of whiteness and lifelessness about the broad brows, which descended straight—here he was like a Greek—on the white, large, drooping eyelids; but this was entirely relieved by the soft and pleasant brightness of his hazel eyes. They, with his very agreeable smile, did away at once with the cool, fastidious, indifferent effect, produced naturally by pale, straight features and a moustache with long points. Arthur Nugent's whole look and bearing was what people like to call "distinguished." Before everything, he was unmistakably a gentleman. His graceful, well-proportioned, perfectly held figure looked broader than it really was, and hardly so tall; but his brother Otto, a far stronger and cleverer man, suffered sorely by the contrast. He never was so short or so insignificant as when he walked beside Arthur. This, however, was a thing only to be noticed by strangers, for Otto had his own power of impressing—not always agreeable—everybody who knew him.

"Yes, it is beautiful. I never came here

before," said Poppy, in answer to Otto's exclamation. "Look at the sky and the mountains—but do look at these wonderful frescoes. I want to know their history. How can we find it out, I wonder?"

"Buy a guide-book," suggested Arthur.

He lifted his eyes to the grotesque heads of the Magi, but let them fall again instantly on Poppy, as she stood in the glowing arch of the window.

"You're always practical, old man," laughed Otto. "I am still more so. No need to spend a franc, Miss Latimer. Your friend will tell you all about them."

He could not imagine why the faintest shade of annoyance crossed Poppy's fair face.

"Isn't the studio just round here?" he went on. "Shall I unearth him? Have you seen him this afternoon?"

"No," said Poppy. "Yes, if you like. But don't disturb him if he is busy. I think he must be very busy, as we have not seen him all day."

"He can't work much longer. It is getting dark, and nearly dinner-time," said Otto, disappearing into the churchyard.

"One does so respect people who work," said Poppy to the young soldier, who stood quietly beside her, staring out into the western sky.

He felt that he must not look at her perpetually, or else she might turn upon him with an inventory—like somebody in Shakespeare, he rather thought, but he was not literary—"Item, two grey eyes," etc. Why Miss Poppy Latimer should suggest Shakespeare, he really did not know. Perhaps it was only one instance of the way in which she was so awfully, so alarmingly, so unfortunately, so exquisitely unlike other girls.

"I say, how lovely!" he muttered, in

honest admiration of the sunset. "Ah, yes, I suppose one does—or ought to."

"We do—we must," said Poppy, in her lowest, sweetest tones.

"We must," echoed Arthur.

It was all so funny, so unconventional, such an original kind of first acquaintance, here in the quaint white porch, with its pictures—he and she standing alone together in a flood of light which would have tried most people, but which they, neither of them, had any reason to fear—that all in a moment Arthur lost the wholesome dread with which he had come into her presence. He allowed himself to look, just for a moment, straight into Poppy's "two grey eyes," as sweet as her voice; and he allowed his own eyes to speak. He did it consciously, and then he felt half ashamed, for he had never before seen a look so sweet, so dignified, so innocent as that with which she met his glance of admiration. Arthur felt at the moment as if he had done something wrong; he was more awed than before, and a good deal attracted. It was he who broke the silence, after another long stare into the sunset; and now he spoke quite conventionally, and did not return to the subject of work, which seemed to him supremely uninteresting.

"I hadn't seen Miss Latimer for years. She's looking awfully well. She's one of those people who never change—go on at the same age for centuries. When I was a little boy she was just like she is now."

"Yes. I'm so glad you think so," said Poppy.

She flushed faintly, suddenly reminded of things she ought to have said to Arthur Nugent. The truth was, that between the enchantment of that view and the fascination of the frescoes, ideas of martyrdom quickly mingled with something incomprehensible, she had hardly remembered that this fairy prince had relations.

"And you are all come?" she said, with an air of sudden awakening: "Mrs. Nugent, and Mrs. Otto Nugent, and——"

"And I," said the young man humbly; but he could not, for the life of him, help looking at those sweet, peculiar eyes once more.

To a sudden spectator, it seemed as if those two people in the archway found each other very much more beautiful and more interesting than any dark chain of glowing mountains or reddening glory of the sky.

Geoffrey Thorne came running up the steps from the town, with his sketching things slung over his shoulder and his grey slouched hat pushed back from a flushed face. He had been working all day on the other side of the lake, and had made a better sketch than ever before; at least, he thought so. He did not mean to give it many finishing touches; just one or two, and for these he was hurrying back to the studio, though he feared, as he climbed the long steps, that daylight would be too far gone. It had been a happy day's work; every stroke was for her. He thought he might tell her about it after dinner in the garden, if she would care to hear; and he thought that perhaps she and Miss Latimer would let him row them over some day to that village, and show them that lovely point in the valley where he had found his picture. All this, of course, if she liked the picture.

With her name on his lips, and his pulses beating with the thought that the long, self-denying day was over, and that he would see her soon, he dashed round the corner into the church porch—the shortest way to his studio—and came upon her and Arthur Nugent standing there. Who the stranger was he had at first no idea; for, though he knew that Mr. Otto Nugent's family was expected, he knew nothing about the members of it.

Poppy's head was a little turned away from Arthur; but the smile which had just charmed him was still on her lips, and his eyes were absorbed with her as she asked some further little question about his mother and their journey. What Geoffrey Thorne saw, or thought he saw, with the terrible clairvoyance of love, of a new and sudden interest transforming Poppy, was only instantaneous. He had hardly appeared when—now to Arthur's astonishment—this eccentric woman met him with her hand eagerly outstretched.

"Oh, I wanted you," she was saying—one man as much startled as the other—"Mr. Nugent has gone to look for you at your studio. I wanted something very particular. Are you busy this evening? Can you go out with us on the lake?"

"Was that——" Geoffrey stammered. "Oh, yes, of course I can."

"I thought you wanted to know about these old frescoes," said Otto Nugent to Poppy.

He had just strolled back from his fruitless search, and came into the porch immediately after Geoffrey.

"I did; but it is too late now," she answered. "We must go back to the hotel now, mustn't we? You are coming up to dinner, Mr. Thorne? Let me introduce you to Mr.—Arthur Nugent."

"He's generally called Captain," said Otto, with a benevolent glance at his younger brother. "I don't believe he has a right to such a grand title."

"I very much prefer not to be called Captain," said Arthur, with an air of indifference which seemed to have something else in the background.

Geoffrey stood still. At first he could not collect his senses. He felt bewildered, as if some one had struck him on the head, and yet he hardly knew why. After a moment he muttered: "I must go—I shall be late," lifted his hat to Poppy and went on into the churchyard.

As she walked away with the two young men in the opposite direction, Otto asked if her friend had been out sketching. She answered a little absently that she did not know.

"He looked like it," said Arthur. "Is that your hardworking artist, Miss Latimer? He's got a good face. Is he clever?"

"I think so," Poppy said, with a laugh in her voice and her eyes as she glanced at Otto.

"Doesn't everybody? Doesn't Otto? Oh, don't mind him; he's nobody. He admires nothing. I've seen the most beautiful faces that he wouldn't admire. If he is nasty about your friend's pictures, I have no doubt they're all right."

"He has not seen them," said Poppy.

Otto laughed in his turn.

"I never miss a chance of improving myself," he said. "I like to learn something every day. And when one has an opinion, there are few things so nice as to be confirmed in it. I thought and suspected before, now I know."

"Don't you think people are very tiresome when they talk riddles?" said Poppy to Arthur Nugent.

"Yes; and very disagreeable too."

"And rather unkind, I'm afraid," Poppy added.

And she looked at Otto with a question in her eyes, half sad, half smiling.

"If I am all that," he said, "I had better confess at once. I am disagreeable, but I don't want to be unkind; and I don't rejoice in the fact, except so far as it justifies me. Well, when I went round to the studio just now, Mr. Thorne was not

there, as you know. But I found an old woman, his landlady, and she let me run up to his room. I merely glanced round at his sketches and things. They are bad, and you must not encourage him, really. Tell him to stop painting and go back to his farm, or his office, or wherever he came from. He'll never do anything in art."

"But I can't," said Poppy. "He loves it; he works so hard, and cares for nothing else. He has so many good ideas, too; and he is not satisfied with his work, you know. He has a great deal of ambition, and longs to improve. How can one tell him to give it all up, and go back to some uninteresting drudgery?"

"Especially," said Arthur Nugent, in his low, pleasant voice, "as he wouldn't be likely to believe you, or to do as he was told. Why shouldn't the poor chap stick to painting if it pleases him—unless he has got to make a living by it?"

"I don't think that is necessary; his father is well off," said Poppy. "Yes; if he likes it, why shouldn't he do it? Many amateurs paint worse. I suppose it is not good for art: but one must think of individuals."

"Ah, there you are wrong," said Otto earnestly. "The really philanthropic thing is to extinguish bad work. Think of all the second-rate, third-rate work that swamps the exhibitions. That is how art gets dragged downhill in these days—partly because people who know are too soft-hearted to say what they know. It is a matter of despair. When a man has come to your artist's age he shows what he can do. His best friend would be the person who dared say to him, burn all that rubbish and never touch a brush again."

"I say! but what has he done to you?" remonstrated Arthur. "Besides, it strikes me one would have to be infallible one's self before laying on to anybody in that style."

"Yes," Poppy eagerly agreed with him. "How could one dare? How could one have enough self-confidence?"

Otto laughed.

"Well, it is no affair of mine. I am only thinking of the interests of art and of the world in general. I say this fellow ought to be sacrificed, but I am not his friend, therefore I can't even give him a hint on the subject."

"I suppose I am his friend," said Poppy. "We have known each other since we were children, and I like him very much."

I am very sorry for him, but I respect him. I am even proud of him, for I like perseverance and hard work. I believe he feels his defects more than you know, and I think he may improve, too, more than you expect."

"Here we are, so that is the last word," said Otto, as they turned under the yellow trees along the terrace of the hotel. "There is Alice."

He turned in at the glass door. His brother lingered a moment, looking at Poppy, whose face was a little flushed and sad. She could not help smiling, for his sympathy, though silent, was very clearly expressed. When she spoke, it was partly in excuse for herself.

"I dare say your brother is right—but it is so hard to discourage people. The less successful people are, the more kind one feels one must be. And poor Mr. Thorne has told me so much—he does care so thoroughly—and whether he is an artist or not, he certainly has what they call the artist temperament—I hope you don't think me weak?"

"If half the world were like you, there wouldn't be much misery left in the other half," Arthur answered gently, and looking a great deal more than he said. "Success gets everything. It is not often any one cares to be good to the failures. It is nice to help lame dogs over stiles, even if the dogs don't know they're lame. Some awfully conceited dogs might not. Does your artist believe in himself?"

"Not down in his heart—not altogether, I think," said Poppy.

"Yes," he went on, perhaps more for the pleasure of standing there and talking to her, than because he cared about what he was saying, "it is all very well for fellows like Otto to talk—fellows who always succeed, and have everything their own way, and are cock-sure of their own opinion, and know all about art without having touched a pencil. All these critics are the dreadful part of life nowadays. It's much better not to know anything. Then you can please yourself, and like what you happen to like, no matter whether the world calls it a failure. By-the-way, you know, I'm another—a regular lame dog. Will you keep a little pity for me?"

"For you!" said Poppy.

Her look and tone, which showed him at least that he was interesting, might have disturbed a much less susceptible young man than Arthur Nugent. To him they

gave a distinct feeling of pleasure. It might almost be called success without an effort, this easy conquest of Poppy Latimer's friendship. He felt that something more, if he wanted it, might certainly come by-and-by. His mother's suggestion, half smiling, half serious, that her dear old friend's niece was both pretty and rich, and that a good marriage would be, for Arthur, a rather pleasant alternative to going back to that horrid India which had already nearly killed him, now seemed a suggestion of wonderfully happy foreknowledge on his mother's part.

At this moment, as he did not exactly know how to go on, it seemed fortunate that his whole family, with Miss Latimer, streamed out into the evening glow under the trees outside, and that his companion was swept away from him to talk to his mother, large, soft, handsome, full of smiles, and to his smart little sister-in-law, who owed most of her good looks to dress, cleverness, and a pair of bright dark eyes.

Dinner at the "Blumenhof" was exceedingly cheerful and pleasant that evening. Other travellers, lonely or bored, looked with admiring envy at the English party where they sat; four remarkably nice-looking women, one of them almost beautiful—and more than that, interesting—and two smart young men full of agreeable talk. Not one of the party showed a sign of the sulkiness which English tourists so often bring down to dinner. They were all happy and friendly together; and the elder man, at any rate, though the least pleasant-looking at first sight, was as ready to talk to strangers as to his own party.

From the far end of the table, where he had taken care to be placed, Geoffrey Thorne could see that line of faces. Three more guards now between him and his princess. He had been late for dinner, as usual, and had not spoken to her or to any of them all day, except for that rather dreadful moment in the church porch. But the sketch was finished. It was good, he felt sure; perhaps the best thing he had ever done. And one of these days it would be offered to her.

He went out of the dining-room before any one else, and strolled along the terrace in the white moonshine, thinking of what she had said about going out in a boat. He knew it was her sweetness, her kindness, her wish that he should not be disappointed again. Somehow in the church porch when she said it, he had

been half stupefied by the unexpected meeting, and by that something, hardly to be realised at once, which he saw in the look and manner of the young man standing beside her. Now when he thought it over, there was something delightful, entrancing, in the knowledge that she wished to include him in the evening's amusement with her friends. At the same time he felt that there could not be much real pleasure in it for him. All these other people were a terrible drawback. A man would have to be very much more patient and more resigned than he was, to find happiness merely in looking at her while she talked to somebody else. Now he half wished he could leave Herzheim to-morrow; and yet he knew that only to see her, under any circumstances, was worth much bitterness and pain. And there was still something to look forward to. Later in the autumn she would be at home at Bryans Court, and she had actually asked him to come to England. None of these people would be there then, he supposed; and he thought of quiet walks in beech-woods, and of the green margins of the roads between his own little hamlet and the Court. This pain, bitterness, doubt, and suspense would be over then, and he would know the best or the worst of it all.

"What are you thinking about, Mr. Thorne?" said a voice close to him.

It was very sweet, and kind, and grave. Already, her tone had changed from what it was when they first met under his studio window. As for him, in those two days he had lived a year.

He turned round with a start. She had come up to him alone: her friends, or some of them, were standing in a group near the house, some yards away.

"Thinking about! Oh, nothing. The unfairness of life," he said, rather nervously.

She surprised him by her answer:

"It is unfair. I am so sorry. But you see to-night is so different. It is not our fault."

Did she understand him, or what did she mean or think that he meant? He only repeated very low, "Our fault!"

Poppy looked at him with wonder in her eyes. Her artist was beginning to be a little odd.

"No," she said. "It really would not be nice to-night, would it? Look at the mist on the lake. I am afraid it would be quite cold and damp down there—and—and—Mrs. Nugent is anxious about her

son. He has been very ill. And Mrs. Otto Nugent is afraid of catching cold; so that makes it impossible, you see. Perhaps another evening, if we stay here——"

"Oh, I see," said Geoffrey, suddenly coming to himself.

The moon was shining on a great sea of snowy mist that had risen from the lake and covered it. The sight was wonderful. Long advance columns were stretching up the river, past the old bridge, along the lower streets and lanes of the town. No boating to-night for the rashest of tourists, and no singing on the water.

"Yes; I can't ask them to venture into that, can I? But I'm sorry you should be disappointed," said Miss Latimer. "Now will you come with me to the others, and tell us all what you have been doing to-day?"

Geoffrey found himself the next moment unwillingly, but unresistingly, following her into the glaring little salon of the hotel.

"Arthur, dear," Mrs. Nugent had called to her younger son, "it is too damp and cold in that horrid moonlight. Come in, dear, please."

Arthur seemed to share his mother's anxiety about himself. He coughed and obeyed.

THE REAL HEART OF AFRICA.

THE not unmusical name of the great African lake, Tanganyika, has been familiar enough in British ears ever since the exploits of Livingstone drew popular attention to Central Africa. But familiar as is the name, it does not convey any very definite impression to the average man. Even well-read persons will frankly confess to retaining only very dim and blurred mental pictures of this great inland sea. But it is really the heart of Africa, and deserves to be so understood by all members of the British race, whose mission seems to be to redeem the Dark Continent from heathenism and slavery.

In what has been happily called geographical anatomy, the vital structure of inner Africa has been described as "a long, irregular, oval-shaped elevation of mountain masses, spreading out in many places as vast plateaux, and buttressed by far-reaching ridges, here and there rising into snow-clad peaks—the backbone from which, outwards and downwards, in

intricate articulation, extends the complicated bony skeleton of the continent."

Deep in the crevices and depressions of this central mass have gathered the great water-cisterns of the African lakes, which send forth their streams east and west, and north and south, into the Mediterranean, the Atlantic, and the Indian Seas. These are the vitalising arteries sent forth from the heart of Africa.

The very heart of hearts, the centre of the great central elevation of mountain heights, is Tanganyika, the shape of its long, deep water-chasm not unsuggestive of a streak of forked lightning. It is doubtless the product of great volcanic action, for that volcanic fires are still heaving and raging beneath the heart of Africa may be inferred from the many hot springs and steam jets in the region, and the frequent rumblings and tremors of the earth.

Broadly speaking, Tanganyika lies within a deep oval crater, more or less steep on the eastern, and very steep on the western side. Inside this crater the streams fall into the lake as the veins feed the heart, but outside they flow away towards the seas.

The lake itself is some four hundred miles long by fifteen to twenty miles broad, with a coast-line of one thousand miles, and a superficial area of thirteen thousand square miles. It is, in short, a great inland sea, and all its shores, shoals, shallows, bays, and harbours have been surveyed and charted by an experienced master mariner, Mr. Edward Coode Hore, who for eleven years has been labouring in Central Africa in connection with the enterprises of the London Missionary Society. His special work was to chart the lake, to introduce regular maritime communication by steamer and sailing craft, and to explore its shores and borders in search of facts about the climate, products, geography, and so on, of the lake basin, and of information about its different inhabitants. To Mr. Hore's labours and records, then, we are indebted for the basis of this article.*

In yet another sense is Tanganyika the heart of Africa. It forms the sort of natural central boundary of the various political spheres here converging—the Congo Free State, the German and British protectorates—between which the lake forms not only a buffer but also a means of inter-communication. A right-of-way is

secured to Great Britain, connecting our territory in Zambesia with our territory in East Central Africa, while the eastern shore forms the boundary of the German, and the western shore the boundary of the Congo State territories.

It lies, moreover, in the direct line of that continuous water-way which men hope to see opened up some day between the Nile and the Zambesi.

Tanganyika is the centre also of African politics, for to its shores come or send for palaver and trade all the great tribes of the continent. Surely nowhere could the conditions of African ethnology and sociology be more effectually studied.

Ujiji, of course, is the great central mart of "the great water," as the natives call the lake. But Ujiji is not, as we have been accustomed to suppose, merely the name of a native town. It is the name of a large tribal territory filling a gap in the mountain barrier of the lake, and is composed of thirty-five districts, each with its own chief, and all subject to a sort of head chief ruling in council with a cabinet of some of the leading chiefs. The name is also applied to the chief town, which straggles down to the lake shore over two of the sub-districts, or counties, of the tribe. And here it may be remarked that although villages on the shores are numerous, the larger and richer of the native settlements are usually planted among the hills.

For long, Ujiji has been the centre for which the expeditions of travellers and missionaries, and the caravans of Arab merchants have made in going to or returning from the great interior. At one time, indeed, it was pretty much of a terminus, but now the expeditions refresh and re-form here for much longer and more arduous journeys. The great terminal station has thus become more like a busy junction. Its population is cosmopolitan in character, for representatives of all the tribes come to it for trade and diplomacy; the Arabs have settled in it and rule the trade (if not the rulers also); while missionaries and travellers of all nations are frequently coming and going.

The principal features of the town are the large, flat-roofed houses of the Arab merchants, with massive walls and broad verandahs. There are some thirty or forty of these arranged in hollow squares, and round and between them are the conical and other huts of the various native settlers and sojourners. The tracks between the scattered dwellings and the banana groves

* "Tanganyika." By Edward Coode Hore. London: Edward Stanford.

and fruit gardens form the only roads, and these all converge on the market-place. This is the great institution of Ujiji—the meeting-place of all the tribes, and the hotbed of many an African intrigue.

"Here is a gaily clothed Arab slave with bright-coloured cloths and a few yards of calico; he takes the place of money-changer, selling his cloth for the beads—which form the currency—accumulated by the retailer, or converting the purchaser's cloth into beads. The amount of cloth in the town, and what comes on the market in the morning, decides the exchange for the day, on which all transactions are based. The standard is the 'doti of satini'—four yards of common Manchester calico—for which nine to eleven bunches of ten strings of beads, called a 'fundu,' was the exchange in 1878. In 1888 this was reduced to three or four bunches. The arrival of a caravan with cloth gives scope for endless financial scares and schemes, while the visitors who come to town influence both the price and the supply of everything. A few Waswahili tradesmen have come from Zanzibar; one is quite prosperous as a carpenter, and may be seen superintending his journeymen and apprentices making doors and windows out of the beautiful and durable 'mininga' (African teak), or patching up on the beach some of the venerable and grotesque-looking craft of the Arab merchants. One is a maker of sandals, and belts, and pouches, and is always busy. Another, as a gunsmith, is highly favoured in the personal service of an Arab. There are beggars; there are itinerant musicians and singers. Fishermen bring their loaded baskets from the lake; women bring their fowls, and eggs, and butter to market from the country. Here and there amongst the natives is one who has been to the coast; he is like a countryman in one of our more obscure villages who has been to London. Here and there amongst the Arabs there is one who has lived at Zanzibar, or who has been to Muscat, and is a weighty man in council in consequence. But to the chief part of this people the outer world has all the mystery as to its shape and character, all the unlimited possibilities it had for us in the Middle Ages."

Narrow as is Tanganyika, the opposite shore is rarely visible, owing to the great evaporation always going on. Sailing down the centre leaves the feeling of being in a trough, but sailing along the shores affords constantly changing views of beautiful

scenery. For long stretches, mile after mile of steep mountains rise sheer from the water; then miles of forest, and anon pebbly creeks with bright clear water and shelly strands, or river-mouths half-covered with reeds and papyrus, amid which the hippopotamus snorts and the crocodile wallows. The lake is plentifully studded with rocky islands, which form healthy sites for summer residences, and its coasts are well supplied with fine natural harbours.

"There are deep quiet inlets with lofty and almost perpendicular sides, ending often in a deep chine with a beautiful cascade; while far above all on the lofty heights overhead the virgin forest of gigantic trees revels in perpetual moisture sheltering tree-ferns, and festooned with lianas and rattan, affording a home for rare insects below and monkeys above the whole array of African scenery alike in its more arid and its most luxuriant form."

On the surface of the deep blue water of this inland sea, all sense of distance seems lost, save when the horizon is broken by the rare triangular sail of the Arab dhow, or the low hull of the native canoe. The dhows are good sea-boats, and stand well the buffeting to which they are frequently exposed on these stormy waters but the canoes are light craft, to protect which during a tempest the crew have frequently to turn themselves into sea anchors—jumping overboard and holding on to the sides to prevent the craft from overturning or being blown away.

"In fine weather," says Mr. Hore "there is no more delightful place for sailing than Lake Tanganyika, there being but very few reefs and shallows. Most beautiful of all, perhaps, is its aspect on a clear night when, relieved of the sun's glare, the voyager is able to enjoy the scene. The busy and perpetual hum of insects on the shore gauges the distance from the beach as the boat recedes or approaches, and seems, with the flickering will-o'-wisp marking out the water's edge to welcome the home-coming voyager—arrived, maybe, after long rain and storm at the desired haven. Another aspect is given by the south-easter of the dry season sometimes lasting as a gale for four or five days, only lulling slightly at night, and causing a bad sea running the whole length of the lake, and against which it is almost impossible for a small craft to beat. At daybreak huge masses of clouds pile

up on one of the great mountain capes of the eastern shore begin literally to drop down over the lake, overshadowing all that side, as the wind begins to rise with a low moan and the water is lashed into little waves, showing their crests white under the overshadowing clouds; then in separating masses and in long perspective procession the clouds seem to rush off across the lake to the table-like heights of Goma on the opposite side, where, one after the other, retaining a separate and pillow-like form, they pile themselves in regular, horizontal order."

Such are two atmospheric aspects of Tanganyika, and another is when the waterspouts form in astonishing numbers and in uncomfortable proximity to the navigator. Fierce squalls and rough cross-seas mark the changing of the seasons.

The climate, however, is by no means so unhealthy as has been generally supposed from the reports of casual travellers. It is certainly much healthier than the coast regions where some of the Mission Stations have been located, and it is probable that the heavy mortality and sickness among Europeans penetrating into the heart of Africa have been more due to the fatigues and hardships of the journey than to the climatic conditions.

Tanganyika is some two thousand seven hundred feet above the sea, and affords for all purposes an ever-available supply of fresh water, which, by analysis, has been found to contain less organic impurity than Thames water. For Africa, one would call the climate of Tanganyika—away from the marshy river-mouths—decidedly salubrious.

The fauna and flora of the heart of Africa also exhibit the central characteristics of the region. On its shores may be found specimens of all the vegetable and animal families distributed over the different parts of the continent. On the heights of the western shores, the numerous forests extend right back to the valley of the Congo, and are filled with innumerable enormous valuable trees. On the eastern shores are grassy plains, studded with acacias and palms, and the stunted vegetation characteristic of East Central Africa. In the north-east and at the south, the oil-palm abounds. Round the villages are the tamarind, the castor-oil plant, hemp, and pepper. In their fields the various tribes cultivate cotton and tobacco, maize, rice, beans, sweet potatoes, cassava, pumpkins, ground-nuts, and bananas. In the

Arab settlements are found lemons, citrons, custard-apples, pomegranates, and mangoes; and at Ujiji are cocoa-nut and date-palms.

Then as to birds, all the types of Africa seem to be here. The ostrich on the plains; the guinea-fowl, partridge, and pigeon in the woods; the pelican, spoonbill, and crested crane in the marshes; the solan goose, duck, and teal in the lagoons; the ibis and others in the creeks; the vulture, the hawk, and the fish-eagle overhead; the golden oriole and the kingfisher among the reeds; and innumerable small birds in the trees and bushes.

All the African animals, too, are here in evidence—the lion as well as the elephant, the porcupine as well as the monkey, the antelope as well as the hippopotamus, and the buffalo as well as the zebra.

The waters are richly stocked with fish, from the tiny whitebait to the "singa" of six feet in length. Shell-fish abound in many forms quite new to science, and fresh-water crabs and shrimps are eagerly caught and eaten by the natives.

Two distinct kinds of scene seem to typify this remarkable region. Where the primitive repose has been broken by long and unhappy experience with aliens from afar, the disposition now is to regard all strangers with suspicion. In these parts the houses are built closely together, within stockades, and perched upon high and easily defended situations. In the undisturbed districts the houses are scattered widely apart among groves of bananas or fields of corn and cassava, with some central cleared space used as a market, while upon the beach are drawn up all the varieties of craft known to the African boat-builder and fisherman.

Collected round this great lake are no fewer than twelve distinct tribes, whose names are: Wazige, Warundi, Wajiji, Watongwe, Wafipa, Walungu, Waitawa, Warungu, Waguha, Wagoma, Wabwari, Wamsanzi. The peculiarity of African names is in the change of the prefix "U" from the name of the country to the prefix "Wa" in the name of the inhabitants. Thus, Wajiji are the people who inhabit Ujiji, Wanyamwezi the people who inhabit Unyamwezi, and so on.

The territories of these tribes vary in size, that of the Wazige having a coast-line of only thirty miles, while that of the Watongwe has a coast-line of one hundred and forty miles on the lake. The Warundi, again, live on the shores only, and are

famous fishermen esteemed by their inland neighbours.

One of the curiosities of the lake is the peninsula of Ubwari, inhabited by the Wabwari. This is a little kingdom, self-contained (to use a Scotch term) on a hilly ridge some thirty miles in length and five to ten miles in width, with several little lakes in the hollows of the ridge. These Wabwari are quite distinct in features and manners from the other tribes. They are much lighter in colour, and have tapering limbs, with very small hands and feet. They are ivory-hunters, and are suspected also of being slave-dealers. This peninsula springs from the western shore at the top of the lake, where are current traditions of tribes of dwarfs and cannibals in the "hinterland," the country behind the mountains. Thus native traders rather fight shy of this part of the lake, but the Arabs do a large business with the semi-boycotted tribes. It is noted that these tribes make the best ironwork of any that has been seen in Central Africa.

The native Swahili name of Tanganyika means, literally, "the mixture," and very appropriate is the nomenclature. In the bosom of the lake meet and mingle all the waters of the vast surrounding framework of hills.

"In like manner," says Mr. Hore, "the various tribes represent the races or families of Africa, as though each, pushing forward towards the interior, had mounted the inner heights, and, descending into the central depression, ranged themselves around the shores of Tanganyika. Side by side still, but in much closer contact, the same races are neighbours there as on the larger circumference of the sea-coast; but across the lake, each facing some other of widely divergent character, complexion and language. Two instances will suffice to illustrate this: the negro and Mhuma (or Abyssinian) type of African. The negro race extends in unbroken line from the western sea-coast to Tanganyika, where they are represented by the Wamarungu, the Waguha, and Wagoma.

"The section of Africa thus occupied is one of those parts where the inner heights are so broken down over the terrace that it is obliterated, the whole forming one grand continuous slope from the centre to the coast. Its inhabitants, in like manner, exhibit a certain continuity of habits, manners, and industries throughout, only modified by the influence of foreigners and foreign things near the coast. The Mhuma,

represented on the lake by the Warundi and Wajiji, show more clearly the changes incident to more varying habitat. . . . We find them on the plains become wandering nomads and cattle tenders; further on, but still retaining their cattle, they are found cultivating the ground or settled as a shepherd class among other cultivators; and finally, on the lake shore, having found a permanent home, while still retaining their cattle, they have fully developed or revived all the native industries of ironwork, weaving, agriculture, etc., by which, as by their features, we recognise their relationship with the natives of the north-east coast."

Further, at Tanganyika has been found proof in support of the experience of those who have penetrated the continent from the west coast, namely, that the further from the coast the better is the condition of the natives, morally, socially, and politically. Industrially, too, one might say, for among the peoples of the Tanganyika basin are to be found the germs of most of the useful arts: the mining and working of metals; the spinning and weaving of cotton; the making of pottery; and the pleating of vegetable fibres into ropes, mats and baskets.

Is it possible that the African native has been misunderstood and calumniated for generations, that he has been called lazy merely because his wants are easily satisfied, and savage and bloodthirsty merely because he has had the spirit of patriotism strongly infused with physical courage?

Clearly we have much to learn yet both about Africa and the Africans; and from what we have said it will be seen that no better centre for the study can be indicated than this strange composite region of Tanganyika, which physically, ethnologically, and commercially is the real heart of Africa.

THE LIBERTY OF THE SUBJECT.

I AM becoming stout. It appears that during the last two years I have increased something over a stone in weight. I suffer no inconvenience from the fact. My health is good. I live as I always have lived, even from my boyhood upwards. I enjoy my life. The person who suffers is a near relation. At least, I am beginning to think that he must suffer, because of his continued perseverance in his attempt to make me suffer too. My increase in pon-

derosity acts on him as a red rag acts on a bull. I never see him but he explodes.

"Good Heavens! my dear fellow, what a sight you are! It's disgraceful!" That is what he exclaims every time he sees me. "A man of your height ought to weigh——" I don't know how much a man of my height ought to weigh, but he knows, down to the fractions of the ounces. "Look at me! I haven't an ounce of superfluous flesh upon me. I'm as fit as a fiddler. You ought to——and you could——get eighteen pounds off in less than a month."

If I would let him, he would get eighteen pounds off in less than a month. He regards me, not only with unmitigated contempt, but, in a sense, as a positive criminal, because I refuse to let him. It's a fact. He would make my life a misery, from my point of view, because of those eighteen pounds off—to please him, I will call it superfluity. He would upset my most cherished habits. He would turn my whole existence upside down. I need only mention one thing he wishes me to do. He wants me to get up every morning soon after six o'clock, put on three or four suits of flannels—all the flannels I possess, is how he words it—three or four woollen mufflers—"That's where the fat is, about your neck," he says—a thick woollen cap, and, wet or fine, trot a quarter of a mile out—"Half a mile would be better," he says, "but you might begin with a quarter"—and a quarter of a mile in. I would almost rather put on a stone a day than do it. Yet, if he had the power, I verily believe that he would make me do this—to me—hateful thing.

The man of whom I am speaking is not a lunatic. He is an eminently sane and an eminently clever man. He is a man who has already made a mark in the world, and who will make a still greater mark in the world, and I am strongly of opinion that he will owe his success in no slight degree to his extraordinary propensity for making men do the things which he likes, and which suit him, but which they don't like, and which don't suit them. He gets up early. He would like to make all other men get up early. He likes to have a swim—in a bath, or a river, or a sea, or somewhere—as soon as he is dressed. He would like all other men to have a swim—in a bath, or a river, or a sea, or somewhere—as soon as they are dressed. When he has had his swim he likes to go for a gallop across country. He would like other men when they have had their swim

to go for a gallop across country. And so on with all his tastes. He would like his tastes to be universal, and I repeat that, if he had the power, he would make them universal.

You are a fortunate individual if, when you look round among your acquaintance, you do not find this type of man quite a common one. If you are not just such a man yourself, I shouldn't be surprised. It is a type which, it seems to me, is increasing by leaps and bounds.

This is a question of the liberty of the subject. It is a question of whether a man is to be allowed to do what he himself wishes to do, or if he is to be compelled to do what other men wish him to do. In other words, if he is to live his own life or another man's. It is rapidly becoming the question of the day. There are things which most of us are agreed that men ought not to be allowed to do, even though they may wish to do them. For instance, we are, as far as I know, unanimously agreed that a man ought not to be allowed to kill his mother. But it is not to that sort of thing I am referring.

Governments are interfering more and more with the details of daily life, and individuals are following their example. Brown finds himself unable to leave Jones alone, and Jones finds himself unable to leave Brown. Brown goes to bed at ten o'clock, and he takes care that the members of his household go at the same time. The lights in Jones's front windows are always burning till two a.m. This thing is a grievance to Brown. He never speaks of the lights in Jones's front windows—and he always speaks of them when he speaks of Jones—without a sort of horror. If he had his way, he would insist upon Jones extinguishing the lights in his front windows at the same instant that he extinguishes his own. On the other hand, Jones—as might be expected, some folks will observe, from a man who never puts out his lights till two a.m.—never goes to church. When, on Sunday morning, Brown with his offspring, down to the three-year-old, starts for his favourite place of worship, Jones simply rages. He uses the most extraordinary language with reference to his opposite neighbour, Mr. Brown. If he had his way he would insist upon Brown spending his mornings as he spends his—in reading the Sunday papers.

Why should these things be? Why should not each man let each other man

live the life which suits him best, and wish him joy of it? Why not? Have these things always been? I hope, for the sake of the generations which have gone, that they have not. If they have, then for my part I think it is just as well for those generations that they are gone.

Then there is the social tyranny—the tyranny of the custom of the hour. I have heard recently of a man who, in certain circles, was regarded almost as a pariah. Why? Because he didn't tub himself in the mornings. I have no objection to a tub; I indulge in one myself. What objection this man had to a tub I can't say. I have never spoken to the man in my life. But it appears that he never does tub himself, and that he has admitted as much in a moment of rash confidence—to his sorrow.

When I was at the club a little time ago, this man happened to enter the room. Colonel Gawler glared at him—I was conversing with Gawler at the moment.

"That's a nice man," observed Gawler, in a tone which more than hinted that, in Gawler's estimation, he was anything but a nice man.

"What's the matter with the man?"

"Fellow never washes himself."

To my knowledge I had never seen the man before in my life. But he did not look to me like a man who never washed himself. He looked as clean as Gawler. I asked Gawler, since the man looked clean, and since he never washed himself, who then washed him. It then came out that what Gawler meant was that the man had been heard to admit that he never tubbed. I said that perhaps that was because the man didn't like a tub. Then Gawler glared at me. I am under the impression that he then and there set me down, in his own mind, as an unwashed animal myself. He was good enough to observe that a man who didn't tub oughtn't to live. I thought that rather strong, even for Gawler; because, if a man who did not tub himself—tubs only came in yesterday, they may be gone again to-morrow—was not allowed to live, what would become of the liberty of the subject? I fancy that question would be a poser, even for Gawler.

I am a smoker. I smoke pipes, cigarettes, and, when I can get them, cigars. I smoke everywhere. I have smoked in bed. I may smoke there again some night, when,

having encountered some fresh and unusually glaring attempt to interfere with the liberty of the subject, I am particularly anxious, before endeavouring to woo sleep, to soothe my agitation. I smoke in every nook and cranny of the house. I smoke in my wife's drawing-room. She does not object, not because she smokes herself—she doesn't; she regards the habit as manly, but unwomanly; she knows that I am a slave to the "bestial nicotine habit"—that is what I saw it called in print the other day—and she loves to have me with her, and being with her, to know that I am happy: for which I say, God bless her!

One would think that in this, theoretically, land of liberty, if my wife chooses to allow me to smoke in her drawing-room, it would only be her affair and mine. But it seems that this is not so. Mrs. Blacker has been hinting to Mrs. Clacker that my wife is no better than she ought to be. It is my smoking in the drawing-room which has done it. Mrs. Blacker is of opinion that my wife ought not to be allowed to allow me to smoke in my—or her, I really do not know which it is—drawing-room. Mrs. Blacker does not allow Mr. Blacker to be guilty of such an action; ergo, my wife ought not to allow me. This appears to me to be, if not illogical, then, at any rate, a trifle hard. But perhaps in these matters my point of view is peculiar. I am beginning to think it must be.

There is a story told somewhere of a young man who was placed in what, under the circumstances, was rather an unfortunate situation. This young man—he must have been an enterprising young man, and full of resource,—had nothing to live upon except what are called, perhaps ironically, "expectations." He had "expectations" from two different branches of his family, and nothing else. He used to quarter himself first upon the A branch, and then upon the B branch—with the intention of giving general satisfaction, and of doing his duty to both. This arrangement looked very well in theory, but it did not work out so well in practice. The A branch were Anti-everythingites; they lived upon a handful of pulse and a gill of water a day. And, on the same lines, in all other respects they made of life a wild carouse. The result was that when that young man quitted the hospitable shelter of his relatives' establishment, he had not only "got off eighteen pounds," but he had "got off"

everything else as well. There was nothing left of him but skin and bones. That sort of thing did not suit that young man at all. He was only the shattered wreck of what he ought to have been.

From the A branch he passed to the B branch. And then what a change came o'er the spirit of the scene! The members of the B branch of that young man's family were some of the best fellows in the world. They drank—great powers! how they drank! And they ate—their potations never destroyed their appetites. They were free livers all round, dreadfully free livers. "No canting humbug about us!" they explained. They were "terrors to go."

It is certain that that young man did require building up. But not quite on the lines on which the members of that B branch insisted. They made him drunk immediately on his arrival, which was an easy thing to do, and they kept him drunk the whole time he was with them, which was an equally easy thing to do. This sort of thing did not suit him any more than the other kind of thing. The truth is that this young man had a constitution of his own, and, if he had been allowed to live his own life, he might have done very well. But he was not allowed. The consequence was that between them, the A and B branches of his family, they killed him. He died. So they realised what, under the circumstances, must have been his "expectations."

The moral of this young man's sad story is surely applicable to a large number of the inhabitants of this great country. What with the vegetarians, and the people who recommend a meat diet—the relation whose soul hankers to "get off" my eighteen pounds strongly recommends me to, if possible, subsist upon nothing but meat—and the people who tell you to go to bed early, and the people who tell you to do with as little sleep as you possibly can, and the teetotalers, and the people who warn you against the impurities of water, and the other people who point out the evil effects of effervescing liquids, and the still other people who advise you—particularly when you are thirsty—not to drink any liquid at all; what with these people, and the many other people like them, some of us are in danger of sharing the sad fate of that unfortunate young man, and of realising the "expectations" which he realised to the full. When will the day come, in this land of liberty, when each man will

allow each other man to pursue in peace, and without overt or covert molestation, his own line of progress to the grave?

"Henrietta," remarks the young gentleman in the "funny" paper, "by all that has gone before, by all that is to follow after, I implore you to be my wife!"

"Robert," she replies, "I love you. I love you truly. There is only one obstacle which prevents my saying yes. But that obstacle is insurmountable."

"Oh, Henrietta, what can it be?"

"You part your hair at the side. I have resolved that I will confine my matrimonial speculations to gentlemen who part their hair in the middle."

If Robert is a wise Robert—and one may suppose that even men in love are sometimes wise—he will accept Henrietta's refusal as final. A young woman who, at such a crisis in her life, can make a point of a "middle crossing," will, later on, develop an eye for "details" which will, probably, not tend to an increase of Robert's comfort. There are such people as Henrietta in the world—even out of the "funny" papers. There are husbands who quarrel with their wives—and would like to rend them—because they, the husbands, prefer broad-toed boots, and their wives prefer pointed ones.

"Can't afford to know Parker," observes Barker, who has just cut the, so far as you know, estimable Parker dead in the street.

"Why not?" you enquire.

"Can't afford to know a man who wears tweeds on Sundays."

"That man Barker," Parker tells you in confidence, when you meet him shortly afterwards, "couldn't exist outside a frock-coat and a 'topper.' I tell you that such idiots ought to be boiled alive!"

Why cannot people let each other alone? It is absurd to talk about living in an age of universal toleration until they do. The truest toleration consists in not only allowing a man to differ from you, but in not even attempting to bring him over to your opinion. With the beginning of the attempt to bring him over to your opinion toleration ceases. That's a fact.

Take the case of fiction. We will grant that to read nothing else but fiction inevitably, and invariably, tends to weaken the mental powers. Very good. I say that we will grant it; but, even granting it, if Jones deliberately chooses of malice aforethought, and because he wishes to live his own life in his own way, to weaken his mental

powers, what has that to do with Brown—who, by the way, is an entire stranger to Jones! Why should Brown endeavour to insist upon Jones giving the whole, or even part, of his attention to, say, works on political economy, which happens to be Brown's favourite reading, but which Jones simply loathes? If you look at the reports of the Public Libraries you will find that, in this respect, Brown is infringing on the liberty of the subject—the subject being Jones. It seems to me that echo answers—why?

Smith tells me this pleasing little anecdote. He is acquainted with a certain family in which it is the custom on Sundays to "hide away"—that is how Smith puts it—all works of fiction, and to ostentatiously display quite another kind of literature altogether. Well and good. If these people have a taste that way, there is no reason why they should not indulge it. Smith sees none. Only, in Smith's house, no custom of the kind prevails. There you may read on Sundays the same books which you read on week days. And this thing is gall and wormwood to those other people. The thought that Smith should have ideas of his own on such a subject is more than they can stand. So—with the best intentions in the world—they endeavour, on Sundays, to beguile Smith's children to their house with a view of removing them out of the reach of contamination. If this is not an infringement of the liberty of the subject, Smith wants to know what is. I don't know. I tell him so. He declares that they are attempting to poison—it is a strong word, but it is Smith's—the minds of his children against their parents. They are actually teaching them to sit upon their father. A Sunday or two ago—the poor man asserts that he has no time to read a book except on Sundays!—he was reading that well-known story of Quilpen's, "Kiss Me Quick and Let Me Go," when his eldest, Jane Matilda, observed, amidst the approving glances, Smith maintains, of her brother and of her sisters, that Mr. and Mrs. Blenkinsop-Jawkins—the Blenkinsop-Jawkinses are the people who "hide away" the story-books on Sundays—were both of opinion that a father of a family set a bad example by indulging, in the presence of his children, in light literature on the Sabbath Day. That does appear to me dreadful, that the Blenkinsop-Jawkinses should have prompted Jane Matilda to say a thing like that! Goodness

knows that children nowadays are quite ready enough to sit upon their parents without extraneous aid. I speak as a parent myself.

Referring to our children, how does this question of the liberty of the subject apply to them? There have been occasions when that enquiry has come home to my own conscience. To what extent are we entitled to cram our notions of things down their throats? This appears to me to be a matter which requires delicate consideration. I am aware that some people do not think so. There are parents who make John and Mary swallow their smallest dicta as if they were the final pronouncements of infinite wisdom. But if, in this matter, injustice is done now and then, and the liberty of the growing subject is infringed, I console myself with the reflection that if you train up a child in the way in which you think he ought to go, you may be quite sure that he will depart from it when he is old. It is rather a doleful consolation now and then, especially if you stand in the shoes of a parent. Yet it certainly is a fact that if you bring up a child to be strictly Sabbatarian, it is at least level betting that he will be vice-president of the National Sunday League before he dies. And if you bring him up in the ways of the Sabbath-breaker, he will be on the committee of the Lord's Day Observance Society before the curtain rings down on the last scene of all. These things are mysteries; but so it is.

For my part I would venture to make a confession of faith which I am only too painfully conscious is just now likely to bring down on the head of any one who makes it, from the most influential quarters, the bitterest opprobrium. If I had my own way—I am never likely to have it, so pray let everybody keep his temper—I would let each man do, within the widest possible limits, as the conventional American is supposed to express it, "what he darned well pleases." In other and less notorious words, I would respect the liberty of the subject. I do so like to do what I like, that I feel sure that other people must like to do what they like. And I would let them do it. I really would; and I would think no worse of them because they did it. I really wouldn't. I would let each man, within the widest possible limits, live his own life in his own way. There, for me, would be Utopia. I am unable to place myself in

the place of every other man; but I am able to realise that a man may have, deep down, reasons for the things he does which I, because of my constitution, and because of my education, am incapable of conceiving. I take it for granted that this is so, knowing that I have reasons for some of the things I do, which other men appear to be incapable of conceiving.

There are people who, in public and in private, are always urging that every man and every woman, and, I almost fancy, every child, should have a "mission." It seems unnecessary that these people should do this. Every average man already has a mission. His mission is to interfere with every other average man. There are certain churches which do not proselytise. For my part, I admire them for that if I admire them for nothing else. They do not save a man by destroying his happiness. They do not infringe upon the liberty of the subject. One notes that the people who are keenest to act the missionary to others, are also keenest to resent other people acting the missionary to them. A "religious" paper some time ago actually applauded a mob which had assaulted some Mormon missionaries in the streets of Manchester. That religious paper said, right out, that those Mormons had only received what they deserved. To the conductors of that paper, the idea that Mormons should "come the missionary" over us was dreadful. But that we should "come the missionary" over Mormons, that was simply our bounden duty and was written in the skies. Circumstances alter cases. Odd how indignant some folks become if you apply this truism to them. They feel fit to burn you at the stake.

I have sometimes felt, when I have been in a more than usually wicked and malicious mood, that, if I were a billionaire, I should like to spend my millions in establishing, on a firm basis, say a Mohammedan propaganda. I would build a mosque in every great town, and do the thing in style. I venture to prophesy that those Mohammedan missionaries would gain as many converts in England as our missionaries gain among the Mohammedans. But would not our missionaries and their supporters revile! The very men who are appealing to heaven and earth because our missionaries are violently objected to by the Chinese, and not even suffered by Mohammedan communities.

"Liberty of conscience" is a phrase which

means to most men liberty only for their own consciences. You say that everybody knows that! But they don't; or, at best, men only know it of other men and not of themselves! "Toleration" means to most of us that we must be tolerated, our crotchets, and our fads, and our idiosyncrasies, not that we must tolerate the crotchets, and the fads, and the idiosyncrasies of others. Perish the thought! "Liberty of the subject" is a legal catchword or a party catchword now and then. How many of us consider that a man's liberty can be whittled away, "here a little, and there a little," until there is none of it left at all? So that we are bound who ought to be free!

We are told that the height of politeness consists in a man, who knows all about the subject in hand, listening, with courteous attention, to the man who knows nothing about it. One begins to think that the truly great man is the man who, knowing that his friend differs from him on every point, allows him to differ, and still remains his friend. After all, it is the little people who won't let us alone. Some of them may be clever, but they are not great, not truly great. It is the little men who remark on the fact of our wearing turn-down collars when "stand-ups" are the fashion of the hour. Great men realise that trifles form the sum of human happiness, so they let them alone. Great men realise how dear our own small peculiarities are to each of us, so they do not gail us by attempts at improving them away. It is the little men who do these things. It is the little men who want us to go to bed at ten because they want to go to bed at ten, and who want us to get up at six o'clock because they want to get up at six. Unfortunately the world is made up of little men.

It would almost seem as if worse were coming. We are threatened with a dead level of uniformity. Centralisation is all the cry—organisation. Individualism is to be stamped out. We are all to be of one pattern. We are not all to have our own tastes. We are all to have one taste. We are not each to do the thing he likes in the way he likes to do it. We are all to do the same thing in the same way. If a man shall do it in his own way, woe betide him! He is a blackleg, worse than a thief! In short, we are no longer to live our own lives, but the lives of other men. In the liberty that is to be, the liberty of the subject is doomed.

Well, we shall see. Those see most who live longest. The Puritans had their day. The reaction of the Restoration followed. Nothing seems so sure as that the things of to-day are not the things of to-morrow. It is fortunate that to some of us the Veiled Figure of the Future always holds in her hands the apples of gold.

BIRD SUPERSTITIONS AND CURIOSITIES.

IN TWO PARTS. PART I.

It is marvellously surprising what an amount of superstition has during the course of ages, since they were first created, grown up and clustered around our beautiful feathered songsters. None are too beautiful, and none too sweet singers to escape the taint; indeed, it would almost appear as though beauty and musical charm had rather added to than taken from the superstitions which have been invented in one age and another. These are not confined to one land, but in some form are common to all. But of the superstitions I have to chronicle, not one is so beautiful as that practised at Lucknow. Every morning in the market birds are purchased by the pious Hindoos that they may set them free. This is done as a work of atonement, in imitation of the Jewish scapegoat. The merit is not attributed to the Deity, but in a large measure to the bird itself, or from its attendant spirit; and hence birds of good or bad omen, especially kites and crows, are in much demand, and are regularly bought and sold for that purpose.

Without further introduction I will begin with the "cuckoo." In many parts of England, in Germany, and in the north of Europe, there are numerous superstitions concerning the cuckoo, all of which, however, unite in ascribing to it oracular powers. In the Maritime Highlands and Hebrides, if the cuckoo is first heard by one who has not broken his fast, some misfortune, it is believed, may be expected. Indeed, beside the danger, it is considered a reproach to one to have heard the cuckoo while hungry. In France, to hear the cuckoo for the first time fasting is to make the hearer an idle do-nothing for the rest of the year, or to numb his limbs for the same period. There is a similar belief in Somersetshire. Thomas Hall, in "Naturall and Artificial Conclusions"

(1650), says: "A very easie and merry conceit to keep off fleas from your beds or chambers: Plinie reporteth that if, when you first hear the cuckow you mark well where your right foot standeth, and take up of that earth, the fleas will by no means breed, either in your house or chamber, where any of the same earth is thrown or scattered." In Northumberland you are told that if you are walking on a hard road when the cuckoo first calls, the ensuing season will be full of calamity for you; to be on soft ground is a very lucky omen. In Westphalia the peasants, on hearing the cuckoo for the first time, roll over on the grass, in order to ensure themselves against the lumbago for the rest of the year. This is considered all the more likely to be efficacious if the bird should repeat the cry while the devotee is on the ground. The Bohemians say that the cuckoo is a transformed peasant woman, who hid herself when she saw the Lord Jesus coming, lest she should be obliged to give Him a loaf. After He had gone she put her head out of a window, and cried "Cuckoo," whereupon she was at once changed into the bird of spring, while her daughters, who had taken compassion on Him, were placed among the stars as the Pleiades. The Bohemians also say that the cuckoo once had a crown on her head, till at a wedding among birds, at which the hoopoe was the bridegroom, she lent it him, and has never been able to get it back. This is the reason why the cuckoo is always saying "kluku," which means "you rascal." The hoopoe replies "idu, idu"—"I come, I come," but never comes. An Albanian legend says there were once two brothers and a sister. The latter accidentally killed one of her brothers by getting up suddenly from her needlework, and piercing him to the heart with her scissors. She and the surviving brother mourned so much that they were turned into birds. He cries out to the lost brother by night "gjou, gjou," and she by day "ku, ku; ku, ku," which means "where are you?"

In Worcestershire there is a common belief that the cuckoo will never be heard until Tenbury Fair, or after Pershore Fair day, June twenty-sixth. In Shropshire the labourers will, on hearing the first notes of the cuckoo for the year, leave their work and make a holiday for the rest of the day. In other parts of England it is considered unlucky to have no money in your pockets when hearing the first notes of the cuckoo.

Another superstition led young women early in the morning into the fields, that they might hear the cuckoo's notes. If they succeeded they would take off their boot and look inside, and there find a hair the colour of the man they were to marry. Gay, in his "Shepherd's Week," refers to this superstition as follows :

When first the year I heard the cuckoo sing,
And call with welcome note the budding spring,
I straightway set a-running with such haste—
Deb'rah, that won the smock, scarce ran so fast—
Till spent for lack of breath, quite weary grown,
Upon a rising bank I sat a-down
And doff'd my shoe. And by my troth, I swear,
Therein I spied this yellow frizzled hair,
As like to Lubberkin's in curl and hue
As if upon his comely pate it grew.

It is a most common belief among the peasants in Norfolk that in whatever occupation you may be engaged when you first hear the notes of the cuckoo, that occupation will occupy most of your time during the ensuing year. In the Cornish villages they believe that on first hearing the cuckoo, if the sounds proceed from the right it signifies that you will be prosperous, or, to use the language of the country, "you will go vore in the world"; if you hear it from the left ill-luck is before you. In Northamptonshire they turn the money they may have in their pockets and wish for something when they hear the notes of the cuckoo for the first time in the season. If the wish is within the bounds of reason it is sure to be fulfilled.

In all parts of the country one used frequently to hear the children cry, when they heard the cuckoo sing its note :

Cuckoo ! Cuckoo ! Cherry-tree,
Catch a penny, give it me.

I never was able to get at the meaning of this version. There is, however, another version which explains itself :

Cuckoo ! Cuckoo ! Cherry-tree,
Come down, birdie, play with me.

As the advent of the cuckoo finds the season backward or forward, so will the prospects of keep for stock and probably the rise or fall in prices of corn vary ; so that

If the cuckoo lights on the bare thorn,
Sell your sheep and keep your corn ;
But when he lights on the blooming hip,
Sel your corn and keep your sheep.

Among the Danes, Mr. Marryat says, the following legend of the cuckoo is in existence: "When in the early spring-time the voice of the cuckoo is first heard in the woods, every village girl kisses her

hand and asks the question, 'Cuckoo, cuckoo, when shall I be married?' And the old folks, borne down with the rheumatics, enquire: 'Cuckoo, cuckoo, when shall I be released from this world's cares?' As many times as years will elapse before the objects of their desires come to pass does the bird continue singing his note. But as some old people live to an advanced age, and many girls die old maids, the poor bird has so much to do in answering questions put to him that the building season goes by; he has no time to make a nest, and therefore his mate lays her eggs in the nest of the hedge sparrow."

In some parts of the world it seems to have been an article of belief that the cuckoo was one of the gods who took the form of the bird, and it was considered a crime to kill it. Its most singular quality in this superstitious lore—and this shows the universality of superstition—was the power of telling how long people would live, the faith of which is still preserved among the peasantry of many parts of England, France, and Germany, and the north of Europe generally. In Poland, says De Gubernatis, "it was a capital crime to kill a cuckoo, because the old Slavonic mythological deity used to change himself into the form of that bird, in order to announce to mortals the number of years they had to live." Cæsius, of Heisterbach, writing in 1221, says: "A 'converse' in a certain monastery, that is a layman who had become a monk, was walking out one day, when, hearing a cuckoo, and counting the number of times its note was repeated, he found it to be twenty-two. 'Ah!' said he, 'if I am yet to live twenty-two years more, why should I mortify myself all this long time in a monastery? I will return to the world and give myself up to the enjoyment of its pleasures for twenty years, and then I shall have two years to repent in.' So he returned to the world and lived joyously two years; and then he died, losing twenty out of his reckoning."

In Wright's selection of Latin stories, there is an account of a woman described as lying on her death-bed, when her daughter urged her to send for a priest that she might confess her sins, to whom her mother replied: "Why? If I am ill to-day, to-morrow or next day I shall be well." But the daughter, seeing she became worse, brought in several of her neighbours, who urged the same thing, to whom she said: "What do you talk about? or, what

do you fear? I shall not die these twelve years; I have heard the cuckoo who told me so." At length she became speechless and was at the point of death. Then her daughter sent for the priest, who came, bringing what was necessary, to perform the last duties, and approaching her he asked her if she had anything to confess. All she said was "Kuckuc" (cuckoo). Again the priest offered her the sacrament and asked her if she believed the Lord was her Saviour, and she replied "Kuckuc," so the priest went away, and shortly afterwards she died.

In a celebrated French romance of the thirteenth century, published by Meon, a Monsieur Renart and his wife hear the cuckoo's notes early in the morning as they lie awake, talking and planning what they will do and be in the future that lies before them. Monsieur Renart thinks he would like to know how many years will be given him in which to enjoy life, so he implores the cuckoo to tell him. "Cuckoo, tell me truth, how many years have I to live? I wish very much to know, cuckoo." The cuckoo answered promptly thirteen times. Then Monsieur Renart turns to his wife and embraces her. "Did you hear?" he asks. "Sir," said Madame Emengart, being a dutiful wife, and very respectful to her lord and master, "sir, I heard gladly, and demand you will kiss me." "Dame," said he, "I am quite rejoiced."

A very common rhyme in England regarding the period when the cuckoo is first heard, is this:

In April the cuckoo shows his bill,
In May he is singing all day;
In June he changes his tune,
In July he prepares to fly;
In August fly he must,
For a cuckoo in September
Not a soul can remember.

In Northamptonshire they say that the

Cuckoo comes in April.
Sings a song in May,
Sings another in the middle of June,
In July flies away.

The cuckoo begins early in the season with the interval of a minor third, proceeds to a major third, next to a fourth, then a fifth, after which his voice breaks without attaining a minor sixth. This deflection of voice is alluded to in an epigram of John Heywood (1587), thus:

In April the koo koo can sing her song by rote,
In June ofttime she cannot sing a note;
At first koo koo, koo koo, sing still she can do,
At last kooke, kooke, kooke, six kookes to one koo.

There is again an old rhyme which tells us that

The cuckoo is a bonny bird,
She sings as she flies;
She brings us good tidings,
She tells us no lies.
She sucks little birds' eggs
To make her voice clear,
And she sings "cuckoo!"
Three months in the year.

Pennant, in his "Zoology," remarks that "the cuckoo's note is so uniform that his name in all languages seems to have been derived from it, and in all other countries it is used in the same reproachful sense—

The plain song cuckoo grey
Whose note full many a man doth mark,
And dares not answer nay.

The reproach seems to arise from this bird making use of the bed or nest of another to deposit her eggs in, leaving the care of her young to a wrong parent; but Juvenal, vi. 275, with more justice, gives the infamy to the bird in whose nest the supposititious eggs were laid: 'Tu tibi tunc curruca places.'

The cuckoo is the subject of one of the oldest English songs now remaining, and is to be found in the Harleian MS., No. 978. It dates from the thirteenth century, and is accompanied with musical notes—the oldest example of secular music extant. It is in old English, but may be easily translated:

Sumer is icumen in,
Lhude sing cucu;
Groweth séd and bloweth méd,
And springeth the wde nu.
Sing Cucu!

Awe bleteth after lomb,
Lhouth after calve cu;
Bulluc sterteth, bukke verteth (goes to fern);
Murie sing cucu,
Cucu! Cucu!

Wel sings the, cucu;
Ne swik (never cease) thu naver nu.

In spite of the disgraceful deeds with which the cuckoo is credited, the poets have, in all ages, since the revival of that form of literature in England, vied with each other in singing its praises. But the greatest and best of all the cuckoo poets was William Wordsworth. Here are two of the verses he wrote about the cuckoo:

O blithe new-comer! I have heard,
I hear thee and rejoice:
O cuckoo! shall I call thee bird,
Or but a wandering voice?

Thrice welcome, darling of the spring!
Even yet thou art to me
No bird, but an invisible thing,
A voice, a mystery!

Chaucer links the cuckoo with the night-
ingale, and John Logan has sent down his

own name to posterity in a sweet poem. He says :

Sweet bird ! thy bower is ever green,
Thy sky is ever clear ;
Thou hast no sorrow in thy song,
No winter in thy year.

The absurd name of cuckoo-spit is given to the froth seen upon blades of grass and shrubs, from a notion that it is the spittle of the cuckoo, on account of its being so plentiful about the time of the arrival of that bird. The froth is, however, expelled by an insect named "*Cicado spinnaria*," which has first sucked in the sap of the plant or tree. A stupid fellow, seeing this froth on almost every blade in his garden, wondered where all the cuckoos had come from to produce it.

If, says an old dream-book, you dream that you hear the cuckoo, your sweetheart will prove a coquette. It also states that dreaming of this herald of summer predicts to the dreamer trials and difficulties in love ; but foretells that he will ultimately marry his intended and be happy for some few years, that he will be a widower before he is thirty-three, and never marry again. If a young woman dreams of hearing the cuckoo, it tells her that her sweetheart is false to her.

A good many superstitions are prevalent up and down the country respecting the robin ; for instance, it is said that whenever two or three robins get together they are sure to fight, when the two-year-olds kill the three-year-olds. There never is a superabundance of robins, although they are regarded as sacred, and much sympathy is expressed on their behalf. Very few persons will kill a robin, and even boys are heard to say :

The robin and the wren
Is the Lord Almighty's cock and hen.

In Suffolk it is said that if you take robins' eggs you will get your legs broken. In some parts of Scotland the song of the robin is held to augur no good to the sick person who hears it, and to those superstitiously inclined, much anxiety is sometimes caused when its notes are heard near a house where any one happens to be ill. An old country adage relates that

A robin in a cage
Sets all heaven in a rage,

doubtless referring to the fact that so tame a bird should not be kept in confinement. Moreover, it must not be forgotten that

The robin, aye, the redbreast,
The robin and the wren,
If ye take them out their nest
Ye'll never thrive again.

In Yorkshire it is a common belief that if a robin is killed, the household cow will give bloody milk, and up to the present day the country folk allege that instances of this are known among them. Still further north it is said that if a robin should die in your grasp your hand will ever afterwards shake as with the palsy. In Cornwall they have a couplet which tells that

He who hurts the robin or the wren,
On sea or land will ne'er do well again.

In Pott's poems (1780), there is this reference :

For ever from his threshold fly
Who, void of honour, once shall try,
With base, inhospitable breast,
To bar the freedom of his guest ;
O rather seek the peasant's shed,
For he will give thee wasted bread,
And fear some new calamity,
Should any there spread snares for thee.

A very common superstition, and one that is believed in wherever Christianity has penetrated, is that the red on the breast of the robin was the result of plucking a spike out of the Saviour's crown of thorns while he was on the way to Calvary. In the act of doing this a drop of blood fell on the bird's breast, which remained there, and has been transmitted to posterity. There is also another legend that far away there is a land of woe, darkness, spirits of evil, and fire. Day by day this little bird bears in his bill a drop of water to quench the flame. So near the burning stream does he fly that his feathers are scorched, and hence he is named "*bron rhuddn*" or burnt breast.

"One of the most musical of Indian birds," says the Rev. S. Langdon, "is the Ceylon robin (*Copsychus saularis*), called by the Candyans Pahan Richeha, the Bird of Dawn. One of the first sounds to be heard on opening the bedroom window on rising is the Ceylon robin's melodious song. In appearance it bears no indistinct resemblance to the English magpie, and like that bird it has a great reputation for ill luck, which is not dependent on numbers, as in the case of the magpie."

George Smith, in his "*Six Pastorals*" (1770), refers to the superstition about taking a robin's nest :

I found a robin's nest within our shed,
And in the barn a wren has young ones bred.
I never take away their nest, nor try
To catch the old ones, lest a friend should die.
Dick took a wren's nest from his cottage side,
And ere a twelvemonth past his mother dy'd.

Writing to "Land and Water," the late Mr. Frank Buckland remarked that "when

examining, with my late friend Mr. Thomas Ashworth, the oyster-beds on the south side of Galway Bay, Ireland, we saw outside a village a number of men and boys collected together under a hedge. From their movements it was evident that something was up. We therefore stopped and asked them what was going on. They told us they were going to 'Hunt the wren.'

"What in the world can be the meaning of hunting the wren?" said I to our excellent friend and correspondent, Mr. Kinahan, of the Geological Survey. 'Why in the name of fortune do these great hulking fellows turn out in a body to hunt a poor harmless little bird like the wren?'

"Let me see," was the answer; 'by Jove, it's Saint Stephen's Day! I know not the reason why this should be the case, but have you never heard the lines about the bird?'

The wren, the wren,
The king of all birds,
On Saint Stephen's Day
Was caught in the furze.
Though she is small,
Her family's great,
Out with your money,
And give us a trate.

"How in the world," said I, 'could a little bird like the wren ever become the king of birds?'

"Oh! don't you know that?" says my friend. 'One day all the birds collected together, and agreed to elect as a king the bird that could go up highest in the air. All the birds, therefore, at once began to fly up as high as they could, till at last the eagle got so high that no other bird could come near him. When he saw that he had no competitors in his aerial position, he came down again to the earth and claimed to be elected king. "Stop a minute," cried the wren, "not quite so fast, if you please; I was the bird that went the highest, for I have been sitting on the eagle's back all the time, and have been higher than the eagle. You must make me the king of birds."'

"That must have been an Irish wren," says I.

"Bedad! so he was," said Kinahan."

The practice of hunting the wren in Ireland is thus referred to in an old nursery rhyme:

Let's go to the wood! said Richard to Robin,
Let's go to the wood! said Robin to Bobbin,
Let's go to the wood! said John all alone,
Let's go to the wood! said every one

What shall we do there? said Richard to Robin,
What shall we do there? said Robin to Bobbin,
What shall we do there? said John all alone,
What shall we do there? said every one.

We will hunt a wren, said Richard to Robin,
We will hunt a wren, said Robin to Bobbin,
We will hunt a wren, said John all alone,
We will hunt a wren, said every one.

Ridiculous as it may appear, it is within the limits of bare possibility that we have here a scrap of old British, or it may be Druidic poetry.

A reason assigned for the hunting of the wren on Saint Stephen's Day is that, when the Saint was being brought to execution, he was escaping from his gaolers, when a wren flew into the face of one of them and woke him. A newer version relates that on one occasion the forces of James the Second were on the point of surprising King William's army, early in the morning, when some wrens, attracted, probably, by the fragments of the repast of the preceding night, alighted on the head of a drum, which had served for a table, and the noise of their bills in the act of picking up the crumbs awoke the drummer, who saw the danger, instantly beat to arms, and saved William's army from defeat. The wren, accordingly, has always been a favourite with the Orange party.

In the Isle of Man the favourite pastime on Christmas Day is the hunting of the wren, and, says Mr. Brand, has been the favourite amusement from time immemorial. It is founded on tradition that a syren fairy once upon a time infatuated the warriors of Mona, and by her charms decoyed them into the sea, where they were drowned. She had thus well-nigh stripped the country of its chivalry, when a knight sprang up, so bold and artful that he had encompassed the death of the enchantress, but that she escaped by taking the form of a wren. The knight, however, cast on her a spell by which she was condemned to appear on every Christmas Day in the same form, with the definite sentence that she should ultimately perish by human hands. From that time to this, once every year from dawn to even, men and boys, with sticks and stones, pursue, pelt, and punish the whole family of wrens, in the hope that the fairy one may fall into their hands. The feathers of the slain are craved as charms to preserve mariners from shipwreck; and many a Jack Tar conceals them in his bosom. The sport ended, the supposed witch wren is, on Saint Stephen's Day, December the twenty-sixth, affixed to

the top of a pole decked with evergreens and ribbons, and as her bearers march through the town in marshalled triumph, amid the blowing of horns, they sing some doggerel lines, each ending with "Says Robin to Bobbin." The sport is now pursued merely for the sake of the pence gained from the exhibition and the sale of the wrens' feathers.

There is a superstition that happy is the person on whom a wren alights; he or she will for a long time be lucky in everything. And it is also a great stroke of good luck if he or she sees a wren drop a feather, and secures it. "Ter quaterque beati" are such people, since they will be happy until they enter a church, or as some say till they wrong or deceive any one.

When robins are seen near houses, and when sparrows chirp a great deal, then be prepared for wet weather. So says a piece of ardent proverbial philosophy, which experience has shown is not very far wrong. In India the flesh and the brains of the common sparrow, particularly of the male bird, are held in great repute for the cure of certain diseases. Certain species of them are used in making love potions, and are administered by rejected suitors to the objects of their adoration. To dream that you see sparrows jumping about your doorstep is a sign of good fortune attending upon any project that you may have set your mind upon accomplishing.

THE LATE MRS. VERNON.

By A. MOBERLY.

Author of "Lady Valeria," etc., etc.

CHAPTER II. MY FELLOW-TRAVELLER.

A WEEK later I said good-bye for ever to my life with the Tarrants and to the old quarters. Major Tarrant had departed to Lincolnshire, taking Lulu and Tottie with him as an unexpected treat for their grand-mamma. Algy was at the camp, the others were disposed of as their prudent mamma had planned, and she was off with her big boxes and Mrs. Crofton to Paris. I had faithfully obeyed her behests to the last. The house was scrubbed and scoured, swept and garnished from top to bottom; the art-muslins in the drawing-room had been freshly draped, like forgotten dusters, over chipped frames and brackets; the sabots, tambourines, old hats and fans, that adorned the walls, newly beribboned;

untrustworthy legs of bedsteads and tables artfully shored up; and missing teacups and fireirons, cracked panes and leaking pipes duly squabbled over with the landlord and the incoming tenant. All was done at last, and Mrs. Gruby, the charwoman, was clearing away my last meal in the basement, while I wandered up and down, keys in hand, waiting restlessly to give over the house to the new-comers.

"You're 'journey-proud,' miss," said good Mrs. Gruby, toiling upstairs after me, "to send them beautiful chops away! I'll take your box down now, but you're not going to try for the six o'clock train, are you? You'll never get through the inventory in time. Why can't you wait for the next?"

Why, indeed! I asked myself that question many a time in the days to come.

"I want to get up to town early. Do get me a cab. I can have the luggage put on all ready, and I think I see Mr. Wadsworth coming along the Crescent now."

I hardly knew myself in the looking-glass as I spoke, hastily putting on my hat. I was flushed, excited, eager. The curious sense of independence, of acting for the first time in my life without reference to any one else, was mounting to my head like wine. I expected to feel miserable, fearful, overwhelmed with dread of the wide strange world into which I must plunge alone. I kept reminding myself of my forlorn condition, and that the Tarrants had cut themselves off from me absolutely and finally; Mrs. Tarrant with many kisses and protestations, the Major bestowing a few gruff kindly words, a letter to serve as a testimonial, uncomplimentary but strictly fair, and a good, useful travelling-bag on me. My future was an absolute blank, in which I could discern no chance or hope of an engagement to stand between me and starvation; my past was as thoroughly done with and thrown aside as my old school-room dress, fairly worn to rags in the work of house-cleaning, which Mrs. Gruby was bundling up to carry away with her.

Perhaps it was the new hat and gown which transmogrified me in my own eyes. I had no time for a second look, for Mr. Wadsworth's foot was on the stair. I fairly swept the good man along in the tide of my feverish energy, and long before five we had got through, and I was driving to the station in fair time for my train.

I need not have hurried. The train was in the station as I drove up, but there it remained for some minutes more. Extra carriages were being added, and a party of soldiers from the camp were entraining. Third-class room there was none. Passengers like myself were rushing desperately from one end of the platform to the other, or being stowed recklessly away by agitated porters wherever they would go. I ran up and down the length of several carriages, seeing nothing but tightly packed helmets and red coats, and was tugging frantically at the door of a smoking-compartment, when a voice called from the next window languidly but imperatively, "Here, porter! That lady may come in with me. Unlock the door, please." The porter hustled me towards a carriage marked "engaged," and I was dexterously hoisted up and shoved in, the door relocked, and the train off before I had time to recover my breath, and gasp my thanks to the lady who had interfered in my behalf.

She sat in her corner smiling a little at my wild looks and panting speech, which ended in a dismayed cry:

"This is a first-class carriage! What shall I do?"

"It will be all right. I engaged it all at Dover, but I got so tired of being alone, that I thought I would look out for some lady to come in with me. I had forgotten the tunnels, you know. There are tunnels on this line, are there not?"

I said I believed so.

"And I hate the dark. Can you bear being alone in the dark? It will be quite night before we get to London, will it not?"

"I think so. This is a slow train, and very much behind its time already."

"Ah, I ought to have waited and taken the express, but I didn't understand the time-bill. I never do. Josephine would have known."

She spoke in a little level childish voice, with an injured tone in it, as if she were very sorry for herself for some reason. She was pale, dark, and pretty, with a sweet weak mouth and wandering brown eyes. She was inclined to be stout, and her age, I fancied, must be between thirty and forty, though I might have been ten years wrong in my guess either way easily. Her dress was plain black, as plain as my own but many times more costly, as even I could see, and her travelling-wrap tossed on the

seat beside her was lined with rich fur. By the time I had noticed this I became ashamed of myself for staring, and opening a paper which I had bought, turned to the advertisement column. My fellow-traveller took up a French novel, tossed it away presently, and yawned audibly. Then she fidgeted with the window-strap, and looked out for a few minutes; then she pulled her long gloves off, and I thought was going to speak to me, but I was too shy to respond, and presently she became perfectly still. I read on for a minute or so longer, and then stole a glance at her. Her face was turned from me, one hand was holding her bonnet-strings, the other, sparkling with diamonds on its plump white fingers, hung down limp beside her. She had fainted dead away.

I had had some rough and ready experience in such cases, so I ventured to lay her gently down, take her bonnet off her beautiful, untidily-dressed hair, and unfasten her stiff high collar and the clasp of her tight belt. Then I dropped the window and rummaged the open travelling-bag for restoratives.

I found a flask of eau-de-cologne and some smelling salts, by the help of which I soon brought the colour back into her cheeks. Her eyes unclosed and she looked piteously into my face.

"I was afraid of this," she murmured. "I haven't ate or slept since I started. I have travelled day and night."

"Then you have been very foolish," I declared curtly. "Especially if you knew you were delicate. Why didn't you bring a maid?"

"Josephine wouldn't come farther than Paris. She's to be married to-morrow. He's a courier, and I know he'll beat her; but she wouldn't listen to me."

"Why couldn't you get some one else?"

"Mrs. Maddison promised to find me one in Paris and to meet me with her at the station as I came through. I did telegraph the train to her, but I don't think I put the right hotel. I had lost her address and Josephine didn't know it. I had no one to consult or help me. Josephine was so wrapped up in her own affairs. And then I was in such a hurry. Muriel's letter said—but you won't understand."

She purred all this out in a gentle, deprecating tone, as if she expected me to find fault with her.

I did want to scold some one.

"What did Josephine mean by letting you start without something to eat in your bag? Or why couldn't you get some luncheon at Dover?"

"I was top ill, and I did so want to get on at once. Perhaps there is something in that basket, I don't know. I never looked."

I lifted a small luncheon basket down from the rack. It contained some very yellow and leathery-looking chicken, a flinty roll smelling of rancid butter, some grapes in a mouldy fermented mass, and other relics of a dainty meal the worse for keeping. Fortunately the bottle of light wine was still available, and some biscuits and a packet of sweetmeats rewarded further research. She had got interested in my quest and now sat up briskly, sipping the wine and nibbling the chocolate, which she insisted on my sharing.

"It was too bad of the Maddisons being away," she plained, "the very first time I wanted anybody to help me. And I knew no one else in the place, except young Scherer, and they had made me drop him of course when we found out who he was, so I couldn't ask him to advise me, though I'm sure he'd have been far more use than the Maddisons, even if they had been there still. Don't you think people's friends are very unsatisfactory as a rule?"

"I never had any, so I can't say."

"And I begged Mrs. Maddison — it made the telegram cost ever so much extra — if she couldn't meet me in Paris to write to Dover and give me a lawyer's address. Just fancy how awkward it will be! Alone in London, quite alone! I can't go about asking the first person I meet: 'Do you know a respectable lawyer?' Perhaps they can tell me at the hotel at the terminus. Do you know anything about it?"

I shook my head.

"I am as strange in London as you are, and as lonely."

She looked at me interestedly, and seemed about to speak, but checked herself.

"I think I can help you," I went on, moved by a sudden suggestion. "I have had the address of a very nice hotel for ladies given to me."

Major Tarrant had mentioned it to me in case of my wanting a shelter. I took the envelope from an old letter I had with me and wrote down the address for her. She smiled vaguely as I gave it to her, and pocketed it without even reading it.

"Thank you so much. Shall you mind telling the cabman to take me there, or, perhaps, if you are going there yourself you would let me go with you?"

"I am going to a home for governesses if they can take me in; if not, to the cheapest lodgings I can find."

"A governess? Then you want a place, don't you? Oh, do stay with me. I took a fancy to you the moment I saw you. You needn't go anywhere just yet, need you? Stay with me. I'm sure you are just the sort of person I want."

"I can't replace Josephine," I said shortly, in my surprise. She looked honestly astonished. "I never thought of asking such a thing! I never supposed you were a maid! But," looking timidly into my unpromising face, "you won't mind seeing after a maid for me, will you? And you would find a lawyer for me? And, perhaps, you would tell me what to do when I find one?"

She stopped, deterred by my ungracious looks — ungracious from sheer astonishment, not so much at her inconceivable folly in making such an offer, as at my own in feeling so unaccountably moved to accept it.

It must have been the recoil after those long years of repression and steady monotonous routine that made me so recklessly desirous of rushing off the beaten track into the first trace of an adventure that presented itself; or was it my real nature to be impulsive, regardless of consequences, fascinated by everything verging on the irregular and unconventional?

"You are doing a very extraordinary thing, Mrs. Vernon" — I saw the name on the travelling-bag — I answered at last, trying to be commonly sensible. "You know nothing of me."

"And you know nothing of me, so we're equal," she laughed, with the pleased look of a child who is getting its way.

"I may be a disreputable adventuress."

"So may I." Her face fell suddenly. "You may hear worse things than that said about me, perhaps, by those wicked lawyers, unless I can get one of my own to defend me. You will help me, won't you?"

Her lip quivered and tears began to gather in her eyes. I saw she was worn out either with travel or anxiety. The miles were flying past us as I hesitated, London drawing nearer. I knew when it came to the point that I could not bear to leave her to fight her way alone. I gave in.

"Before you quite decide I should like you to read this. It is a testimonial from my late employer, Major Tarrant of the 19th——"

She caught the letter from my hand, turned it over without reading a word, and pocketed it as she had the other.

"There, that's settled it! I've accepted your testimonial and you're engaged to me. I haven't a notion what's in it, and I don't care. I'll give you a much better one when you leave me. Oh, I'm so pleased! Now I needn't write and ask Mrs. Maddison to come to me, as I thought of doing. I had got so tired of her, and he was unbearable. He actually lit his pipe in my room one morning while I was at breakfast! Don't you hate people when they get too intimate?"

"I hope I shall never get too intimate."

"Oh, you—you're quite another sort of person. You look like a lady, and poor Mrs. Maddison sometimes—well, never mind her now. Let us settle what we shall do first. We will go to your hotel and ask them there about a lawyer. Perhaps we can see one to-morrow. And a maid. Where shall I get a maid? Look at my hair, isn't it awful?"

She brushed the crumbs from her skirt, settled her dress, but without putting on either bonnet or gloves, and nestled herself in the corner again quite contentedly, while I sat bolt upright, trying to consider soberly the duties I had undertaken.

"I can try and dress your hair for a day or two and keep your things in order. Or I could write letters from your dictation and keep accounts for you. Otherwise, I shan't be much good. I know nothing of society or business matters."

"Oh, but you are clever; I'm sure you are. And you will see after the luggage, and pay the cabs and take care of my purse. Here it is. I know I shall lose it if you don't keep it." She pulled out a thick russet-leather purse and pocket-book and handed it to me. "And perhaps you will take these as well."

"These" were papers tied into an untidy parcel.

"I know if I pack them up I shall never remember where to find them again. Besides, they must be at hand for the lawyer to see. I don't know whether they are of any use after all. It was Josephine made me look for them and bring them. The lawyer would know, would he not?"

I deferred answering this difficult question till I had carefully stowed purse and

papers in my old-fashioned pocket slung to my side under my dress-skirt. By the time they were secured she had put her feet up, and, I rejoiced to see, was arranging herself for a rest. I made her cloak into a pillow for her, and began in my old-maidish fashion to tidy the carriage, putting the scattered articles back in the travelling-bag and throwing the rubbish out of the window.

"I should like to tell you all about it," she began suddenly. "It all looks so different to me now when I come to think it over. I have been a most unhappy woman; but I'm sure—I'm sure it was not through my fault. Do I look as if I had been very wicked?"

I shook my head decidedly.

"Not the least. I should never believe it."

"I knew you'd say so!" she cried triumphantly. "They won't do anything to me for coming back again, Josephine says. And if I once come home I feel as if I must see Muriel or die. I know I didn't care properly for her once. I never did like little children. They said I never cared for her at all. But now to hear that she is grown up and like what I was once, only not beautiful—that is what she says herself—you shall read her letter; and that I am the only one who can help her. I have thought of nothing else day or night ever since."

She spoke incoherently, half to herself, her eyes fixed on some fancied picture, a tiny fold of anxiety on her white forehead, but a soft little smile playing about her lips. I watched her, wondering a little as I put the basket back in the rack above the seat. In that instant came a sudden sickening jar and jerk. I was flung violently forwards and sideways, amidst the crashing of glass and horrid sounds of wrenching, rending, splintering. I was stunned and blinded for the moment, that was all. I felt no pain or hurt, and when I opened my eyes I was lying on my back, my head on the cushioned side of the carriage, looking up to the quiet evening sky with one little silver star twinkling dimly out just above me.

The carriage was completely overturned. I was looking at the sky through a huge jagged rent where one side had been smashed away. The splintered end of a mass of wood or iron hung menacingly above me, and great shattered fragments lay across me, not so as to crush or injure, but rendering me unable to move.

I could twist myself round a little, and by degrees raised myself on my elbow and looked anxiously around for my fellow-passenger. In my ears rang piercing shrieks, groans, shouts of men, and the screaming whistle of the engine. I made out the embankment high above me, with the train and engine and figures of men passing to and fro, looking disproportionately large and black against the sky. I heard afterwards that a coupling had given way, and a heavy luggage van, erked from the rails, had run over the embankment, carrying the end of the train with it. Fortunately, the carriages were nearly all empty, as they had been occupied by the soldiers who had detrained at a previous station.

"You are alive!" I heard a muffled voice gasp close to me. "I thought we were all killed."

I turned a little farther round. I was only pinioned at the knee. Then I saw her lying just beyond me, buried under a heap of debris, her head and arm only free. She was ghastly white, and the blood streamed across her face from a gash on her forehead. Now and then she moaned faintly with closed eyes. I managed to draw my handkerchief from my jacket pocket, and stretching over to her, wiped the blood from her eyes and tried to clear off the broken glass that lay on her neck and shoulder. She looked at me and took the handkerchief and held it against the cut.

"You are safe—you will live and get out of this?"

"They will come to us soon," I answered. "I see lanterns and men with pickaxes."

"Too late for me," she gasped. "I am dying. But I want you—— Listen. I've

done no good by coming home after all. Will you see to it? Those papers—not for Muriel to see. No—no; but take her these."

She stretched out her hand, and I understood she meant me to take off her rings. I slipped them on my own fingers.

"If I live, I'll find her and give her them."

"Now take this too." Her hand went to her throat, where before, when she fainted, I had noticed the glitter of diamonds. "I can undo the clasp. Here"—she held out the velvet band wet with blood—"the locket is for you—for yourself. But let her see it. She will know that I never forgot her. Take everything of mine—money—the jewels in my boxes. They are all for you—but do your best for her. The papers?"

"I have them safe—I can feel them under me."

"Read them—do the best you can for my girl—for Muriel's sake."

"Heaven helping me, I will," I said solemnly, laying my hand on hers.

"You will live. They are coming very near now."

The voices were close at hand. There were sounds of blows and crashing wood, as if they were clearing the wreckage of the next carriage, with now and then a piercing cry, voices raised in pity or calls of encouragement.

I saw her face grow wild with sudden horror, and looked up. The great jagged mass of wood and iron that overhung us, dislodged from its support, was wavering against the sky. It lurched, swayed, and—as I buried my face in my arm, not to see my death approaching—came crashing down upon us.

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PRICE TWOPENCE.

MISS LATIMER OF BRYANS.

By ELEANOR C. PRICE.

Author of "Alexia," "Red Towers," "The Little One," etc.

CHAPTER VIII. A YELLOW POPPY.

"HE admires her immensely — immensely," said Mrs. Nugent. "He told me last night that she was one of the handsomest women he had ever seen—and so good! What are you laughing at, Alice?"

The active and reasonable members of the Nugent family — Mrs. Nugent, her son Otto, and her daughter-in-law—were strolling together up and down the broad walk of the "Blumenhof" lower garden, Otto with a cigarette, Alice swinging a scarlet parasol, Mrs. Nugent talking slowly and earnestly of her favourite subject, Arthur.

Mrs. Nugent was one of those happy people who, without going out very much, know everybody; seldom opening a book, know everything; possessing no income to speak of, buy everything, and do everything which seems to them pleasant or desirable. How they do it is a mystery; that they do it is a fact. Mrs. Nugent was handsome on a large, fair scale; always equal to the occasion, well-dressed, surrounded with attentions. Her health was not supposed to be good, and her habits were more or less those of an invalid; but this want of physical energy did not interfere, any more than want of income, with her doing anything she wished to do. It was said that her spirit was stronger than her body. She did not look spiritual; but she had, in truth, a large supply of mental energy and a singularly strong will. She

had a few faithful friends, being herself a good friend, even in cases where people's misfortunes seemed to make them hardly worth any further cultivation. She was admired and respected by her sons, and Otto never thought it unnatural that Arthur should be her favourite. He himself, in his marriage, had gone entirely against her wishes, and at that time she had been very angry with him. But she had soon come to the conclusion that a family quarrel was too tiresome and foolish, and that it was better to accept what could not be got rid of. Otto's wife, who loved him and admired her mother-in-law, was quite ready to do anything in the way of conciliation, and being clever, worldly, and amusing, soon made herself necessary to Mrs. Nugent. From that time, if Arthur was Mrs. Nugent's darling, Otto and Alice were her most intimate friends.

"I wonder what he means by 'so good,'" said Alice, who could not deny that she had received Arthur's impressions with a scornful little giggle. "So funny, I should say. I think she is the most amusing person I ever met. And really about her looks—Arthur surprises me. To begin with, I thought he admired dark women. And then—is she so handsome, do you think, mamma?"

"Very handsome, certainly, yes," Mrs. Nugent and Otto said this almost in the same breath.

"Well, those statuesque people, with red hair, and white skins, and light eyes, and fine figures, who don't know how to dress themselves, and have that ridiculous look in their faces as if their own thoughts were so important that they couldn't possibly waste time in listening to you—I never did admire them, I can't admire them. What did you say, Otto?"

"I didn't say, dear—I thought—that there is a great deal of human nature even in Alice."

"Nonsense! mamma knows me better. Now, mamma, you must be tired. Sit down on this bench and explain Poppy. Poppy, too! What a name! Did any one ever hear such a name for such a person!"

"You can call her Porphyria," said Otto.

"Thanks; I can neither spell it nor pronounce it. Besides, I've not yet arrived at Christian names, and perhaps I never shall."

"I hope you will," said Mrs. Nugent.

Alice shrugged her shoulders and sat down. The bench was in the shade of an old mulberry-tree, between two large bushes of red dahlias. Otto looked at his wife, smiling, and lighted a fresh cigarette. Mrs. Nugent twisted her face into a thoughtful expression and stared for a few moments at the gravel.

"Now, Alice," she said, "I am going to contradict you all round. To begin with, Poppy Latimer's figure is not what I call statuesque. It is too slight and girlish for that; but it will improve as she grows older. Her hair is not red; that reddish look is what I call auburn, or golden, if you like—just what painters rave about. And, as a fact, her skin is hardly white enough; it's pale, not white, and a little too much all one colour. And I shouldn't call her eyes light eyes; they are very pretty grey eyes with a brownish shade, and the eyelashes are rather dark, if anything, and give a great deal of expression. Then her features are decidedly good—nose delicate, high-bred; mouth delicate, too, and very pretty, only spoilt by being a little sad, a little disappointed, somehow. That goes off when she smiles, though. Yes, my dear, she is an uncommonly pretty girl. Arthur is quite right; and we ought to be thankful, for rich girls are generally ugly and conceited. Now, I'm sure she has a sweet disposition. She is a good girl. As for dress, that can always be managed. And what does it matter if she is a little dreamy? Most nice girls are. She will wake up soon, you will see."

"I hope I shall," said Alice, making an odd little face. "Well, I dare say you are right, though I don't see her quite as you do. But I will stick to it that she has no business with such a name as Poppy. It is a childish name, and she

is anything but childish. Besides that, she does not suggest a poppy. Think of it—a flaring scarlet poppy."

"No—but a Shirley poppy," suggested Otto.

"They are so often pink. There is nothing pink about her. No, if she must be a poppy, it is one of those wild yellow ones that grow at the lakes. They are rather eccentric and unlike other poppies. So is she."

"Very well. Yes, a yellow poppy," said Otto.

"That will do," said his mother, with a shade of impatience, but in a lower tone. "I did not come here to romance and talk nonsense. Now, please be serious, both of you. Whatever this girl or her name may be, my one wish is that Arthur may marry her. We can't expect to find anybody who will suit us all. She is rich and handsome, she is also good; and when you are as old as I am, Alice, you will think something of that, my dear. Well, I came out to tell you that Arthur admires her as much as we can possibly wish. But I also came to say that we must be careful. She is eccentric—you are right there, Alice, and Fanny Latimer cannot deny it. I could not help saying to her this morning that we were all a little puzzled last night by the way in which she insisted on dragging in that artist man and making him completely one of the party. Evidently the man worships the ground she treads on. Now I quite believe what Fanny Latimer says, that it is all benevolence, and so on, on Poppy's side. But that sort of thing is a bore, you know. It's a pity."

"So I think," Otto murmured, gently nodding his head.

"I said nothing about it to Arthur," Mrs. Nugent went on. "Evidently he took it just in the right way. I admired him for being so nice to the man. Did you notice how much he talked to him? It was kind of him and clever too—though the cleverness was unconscious, bless him!"

"I thought the man looked very dull and rather ridiculous," remarked Alice. "But she is just the sort of woman to be followed about by protégés. Tiresome, but I don't suppose it matters much."

Otto was not so sure of that. He observed that one never could quite reckon with the eccentricities of an heiress.

"Exactly so," said his mother; "that

is just what strikes me; and the more good, and simple-minded, and generous she is, the more likely she would be to do something foolish. Pity sometimes leads people into the most idiotic scrapes. No; if we are to be happy and comfortable, and if Arthur's affairs are to go on smoothly, we must get rid of that man."

"But we can't send him away. Any violent measures might have a bad effect," said Otto.

"Of course there is only one thing to do," said Mrs. Nugent, with the slightest laugh and a hardly perceptible wave of the hand, which suggested, however, the stupidity of men. "We must go away ourselves."

"We have only just come," said Otto. "And besides——"

"You understand, Alice?" with a half melancholy, half contemptuous smile.

"We must take them with us. But will they come? And won't the devoted man come, too?"

"No, he won't come, too. She would hardly go so far as to ask him. I don't think he will come, too. But Fanny Latimer agrees with me that this is a stupid, stuffy place. It does not suit her at all, and as for me, I feel that I shall be ill if we stay here. And Poppy is amiable. If her aunt wishes it, she won't say no. We can all move on to-morrow."

Then came the next question—where to go? Alice hoped for something livelier, more in the world, more in the way of meeting people. Otto hoped for a little real mountaineering; he was an active man, and the adventurous side of his nature sometimes rebelled against the domestic. But none of these ideas suited Mrs. Nugent. She pointed out, in emphatic tones, that if one had a special object it was no use thinking of anything else, or straying off after one's own fancies and freaks. She reminded them that the object of the present excursion was the good of Arthur. This was the end to be kept in view. The highest mountain air was too strong for Arthur. Also—a secondary consideration—very high air would neither suit herself nor Fanny Latimer. Then, again, Arthur wanted quiet, and it certainly would not be wise to migrate to any very popular place, where crowds of idle men might flock round a beauty and an heiress. Besides, Poppy herself would probably dislike a place of that sort. No; it must be some quiet place, not too far off, healthy, with nice walks, beautiful, romantic, but not over-

whelming. Some place, Mrs. Nugent rather hinted than said, with looks and smiles that meant a good deal, where two young people would not have anything very exciting to divert their thoughts from each other, and where they would not be interrupted in the peaceful amusement of falling in love.

Mrs. Otto Nugent looked a little impatient, though she laughed and agreed. Otto, gazing at his mother with admiration, observed that she was a diplomatist wasted.

"Not entirely wasted, perhaps," she said. "And you have not asked me if I know the right place; but I do—Saint Carolus, at the other end of this lake."

"Saint Carolus? Never heard of the place in my life before," said Otto.

"But I have," said Alice, opening her eyes wide with consternation. "Can you really mean that? Just a very Swiss hotel on a green slope, with a few tame little walks, and a small collection of old maids and clergymen. My dear, the very dullest of the dull. This is better than that, I should say."

"Splendid air and a heavenly mountain view," said her mother-in-law. "And don't you see that the absence of smart people is a very great thing? You see, Otto?"

"Yes, I see."

He glanced doubtfully and kindly at his wife.

"It can't last very long, you know, Alice," he said. "Nearly the middle of September; the hotels will be shutting up in a fortnight. And when we came here we understood, didn't we—In fact, one must sacrifice something for the good of the family."

"Of course I understand. I'm quite resigned—only it does seem a pity that you should have no mountains," said Alice, who was plain-spoken and at times a little unreasonable.

"We talked it all over the other day, and you were entirely of my opinion," said Mrs. Nugent, looking at her reproachfully. "You said that such a splendid chance for Arthur was not likely to come again. I told you all I felt about it, and both you and Otto seemed to sympathise most fully."

"Dear mamma, I am saying nothing." Alice changed her tone in an instant, and hastily patted Mrs. Nugent's hand. "I sympathise as much as ever. I'll swallow Saint Carolus or anything you think wise. Nobody will rejoice more than I shall when Arthur is married and done for."

Otto's sudden sign to her, and "Take care," came too late. Mrs. Otto's ringing tones were plainly heard by two other people, who appeared just then from a cross path shut off by a belt of shrubs, and came round the nearest dahlia bush into the midst of this family council. They were Arthur Nugent and Miss Fanny Latimer.

All the five people blushed, except Otto, whose amusement conquered his confusion. He turned away to hide a smile, throwing his half-smoked cigarette into the long grass. Mrs. Nugent's face at the first moment turned crimson, and wore a look of terror. She watched the red flowering bush, expecting to see Porphyria walk round behind her aunt. Not seeing this dreaded appearance, she drew a long breath and muttered a small thanksgiving. Alice coloured, bit her lips, looked first at her husband, then at his brother, who was staring at the dahlias with a surprised and thoroughly disgusted expression. The change in his face, generally so open and pleasant, gave Alice a nearly irresistible wish to laugh; and then catching the almost roguish look in Miss Fanny Latimer's eyes, which would not be brought into accord with the shocked propriety and attempted unconsciousness of her pinched mouth and pretty, flushed cheeks, she found the temptation too strong for her, and laughed out loud. In another moment they were all laughing, though Mrs. Nugent's gaiety, in spite of herself, sounded a little forced. She was really angry with Alice, and could not at once forgive her. If Poppy Latimer had been there, her foolish joking talk might have done irreparable mischief.

Mrs. Nugent was equal to the occasion, however. She calmed Arthur, always sweet-tempered, with an affectionate, apologetic look, and she smilingly began to explain to Miss Latimer, who did not particularly want any explanation.

"These uncharitable remarks are made," she said, "because I am obliged to say that I am afraid Herzheim is not quite the climate for Arthur. It seems troublesome to talk of a move, but I really think Saint Carolus would be a better place. It is a tiny little journey, you know. I wonder, Fanny, if you and your niece would dislike moving on there? Of course, if you do we will give up the idea. But it seemed worth suggesting."

"And Alice thinks me a great bore,"

said Arthur, laughing. "Naturally. My dear mother, what has put this into your head? Herzheim suits me perfectly well. Why, we only came here yesterday."

"Leave it to me, dear. Children don't know what's good for them," said his mother, with her characteristic wave of the hand. "Now, Fanny, sit down, and let us talk this over. You may go for a walk, young people."

Arthur joined his brother and sister, who had already begun to move away, and the three strolled together down the broad path leading to the town.

"What's all this tomfoolery?" he demanded as soon as the two ladies under the mulberry-tree were out of hearing. "Why can't we be left in peace? This isn't half a bad place, you know. I was talking just now to that Mr. Thorne, and he says the boating is first-rate, and if you want excursions, there are lovely valleys and alps and things over there. What has my mother got into her head?"

"Only your good," said Alice, while Otto stopped with a philosophical air to light another cigarette.

"Oh, but that's humbug, you know. By-the-bye, excuse me, Alice, but I wish you wouldn't talk about me quite so loud. I suppose if I am to be 'married and done for,' one place is as good as another."

"I'm very sorry, Arthur," she answered heartily. "I won't be so frivolous again. But your mother does not quite think so. She thinks your prospects will be better at Saint Carolus than here."

"But why? The health excuse is all stuff, you know."

"If you want to know you must ask her. I have disgraced myself quite enough for one day. Do let us leave the subject. Where is Miss Poppy Latimer?"

"And where is Mr. Thorne?" asked Otto, in his quietest voice.

"I don't know where she is—I met him just now in the garden. He had come up to fetch something, and was going back to his studio. I rather like that fellow, do you know. I think I shall go and see his pictures. Will you come too, Otto?"

"Not again, thank you."

"Alice, will you?"

"Yes, if you like. I feel rather curious to see them."

In the meanwhile, the plot under the mulberry-tree grew and prospered. Mrs. Nugent was perfectly candid with her friend. Both were equally guilty of match-making; and though Miss Latimer

saw no real danger in the poor artist's admiration of Poppy, she quite agreed that it was tiresome, and might draw Poppy's thoughts in a wrong direction. She could see the point of view from which it seemed advisable to get rid of Mr. Thorne.

After entering fully into Mrs. Nugent's ideas, she left her on her peaceful bench and went into the upper garden, where she found Poppy sitting near the little fountain with a book. The splash and sparkle of the water seemed to be the only sign of life in the sunny stillness there. Poppy was not reading, but watching the water with quiet, happy eyes. She had not been out long, having finished some letters before following her aunt. She had not been there, Miss Latimer knew, when Mr. Thorne had passed on his way to his studio. She had joined Arthur Nugent in the garden just after he had left him. Perhaps both men had lingered about a little waiting for Poppy—that she could not say.

She sat down beside Poppy and plainly told her Mrs. Nugent's wish, mentioning Arthur's health as the sole reason of the proposed move. Then—for she was a good woman—her conscience troubled her, and a flush of shame rose in her delicate cheeks; for she could not tell what Poppy was thinking of, receiving the news, as she did, in silence, only with something in her face that looked like anxiety. It almost seemed to Miss Latimer that she was helping to set a too certain trap for this single-minded, unsuspecting girl. Mrs. Nugent might have felt herself betrayed if she had heard the low and careful words with which Miss Latimer tried to quiet that troublesome little conscience.

"Of course, you know, dear Poppy, there is no necessity at all for us to go with them. We planned to meet here—that was very nice—and I enjoy having Laura Nugent of all things—we have so much to talk about. But it is different for you, and if you prefer Herzheim, we have only to say that we would rather not leave it—no difficulty in that. They are more my friends than yours, of course. Laura will quite understand."

Poppy looked thoughtful.

"Mrs. Nugent is anxious," she said, after a moment.

It was not quite a question, but Miss Latimer answered it:

"Yes, I think she is, and no wonder. Arthur was so very ill. And now he ought, I suppose, to have a more bracing

air than this. But that is no reason why our plans should be changed, Poppy, you know."

Poppy looked into the fountain. She kept her long eyelashes down; her eyes were full of soft, dreamy light, which certainly had no annoyance or opposition in it; her mouth, though very grave, was sweet, and had not even its usual shade of sadness. Still, she did not speak without a little effort, and she did not look up, but gazed still into the water.

"Let us go with them, Aunt Fanny," she said, "if you would like it. Why shouldn't we? Mr. Thorne has done some sketches of Saint Carolus; don't you remember those views of the Jungfrau?"

"Oh! He has been there, has he!"

Miss Latimer's eyes shone and the colour in her cheeks deepened. Then she felt comforted; the painter would hardly find an excuse for going back to such familiar ground. On second thoughts, it was all the better that he should have been there already.

"You are satisfied, then, Poppy?" she murmured, still nervously. "I may tell Mrs. Nugent that we will arrange to go with them to-morrow."

"To-morrow; very well," was the gentle answer.

Mrs. Nugent was not surprised; she generally had her own way.

TORPEDO BOATS.

It may have fallen to your lot on some summer evening to watch from one of the London bridges the full tide gently ebbing down, bringing with it the river traffic, the snorting tugs and long lines of empty or loaded barges, the pleasure steamers crowded with the human swarm, music sounding from the decks, and dancers, perhaps, twirling round as best they may in the crowd. Then, if such were the chance of the hour, you may have seen issue from the westward glow of orange and gold, some dark and altogether strange-looking craft gliding down, silently and as it were stealthily, showing little above water but a rounded deck and deadly-looking snout, like a shark's in its grim ferocity. Deftly she threads her passage through the crowded tideway obedient to the touch of some invisible hand, and with hardly a sign of life about her except the half-revealed figure of some one who is conning her progress. Like an arrow she shoots

past and disappears in the gloom of down the river.

"That's one of Thorneycroft's boats," says a bystander with the omniscience of the riverside man. "She's going to the Brazils, she is."

To trace that torpedo boat to its place of origin, where it first took to the water all armed and ready for a voyage to the tropics, we must travel up the river as far as Chiswick, past the charming, old-fashioned Chiswick Mall, and so to the very churchyard wall which an inscription tells us was built by some extremely pious Earl of Bedford out of respect for the pious dead who were interred within its compass. Chiswick Churchyard is still one of the most interesting of suburban burying-places, with Hogarth's tomb pre-eminent, and yet with many other memorials of notable men and women who sleep there calmly enough undisturbed by the occasional, or, indeed, pretty constant thump, thump from the steam-hammer at the works close by. For Thorneycroft's is close by between the churchyard and the river, with a long frontage to the silver Thames. The works altogether embrace an area of about six acres, covered with the buildings and appliances of one of the most complete building yards for the smaller class of armed vessels that can anywhere be found. The word smaller being, it will be observed, in the comparative, for a ship of over eight hundred tons displacement cannot be regarded as absolutely small; and such is the size of the boat that the firm are now constructing for Her Majesty's Government.

But although the works are extensive, there is nothing obtrusive about them. They seem to have grown there, and have filled up their nook by the riverside without destroying the characteristic charm of old Chiswick—although streets of new houses, radiating in various directions, have sprung into existence to afford accommodation to the numerous employés of the firm. For when in full activity the works employ as many as two thousand workmen; while on what may be called a peace establishment the number may sink to five or six hundred.

The red-brick offices of the firm, standing in a nook of Chiswick, where narrow entries run in and out among old-fashioned cottages with little gardens gay with old-fashioned flowers—these offices, the subdued tint of which is not discordant with the scene, are notable for the models they contain of the various types of boats

which have been made by the firm. There is the old original No. 1 torpedo boat, the first to be rated in the Royal Navy, and of Mr. Thorneycroft's own design. She is still doing good work after fifteen years' active service.

But the name and fame of the Chiswick works are so intimately connected with the history of the torpedo boat—as developed and improved by experiment and thoughtful design—that a glance at the past in connection with torpedo warfare is not out of place.

The actual stress of combat brought to the front the destructive qualities of the torpedo, conspicuously in the American War of Secession, and again in the Russo-Turkish War, when more than one powerful ship of war belonging to the Turkish fleet was sent to the bottom by daring torpedo attacks. Torpedo boats also did good service in the war between Chili and Peru. These successes were obtained by ordinary launches of no great speed, and armed with ordinary torpedoes which required to be actually fixed to the side of the enemy's ship by the attacking boat. The invention of the machine-gun, which rains a shower of bullets almost as a jet of water is discharged from the nozzle of the hose of a fire-engine, seemed to place the big ship, armed with a proper complement of such guns, out of danger of any direct attack from torpedo boats, which could hardly hope to reach the side of the big ship under the rain of bullets which would be poured upon them.

But the invention of the fish, or White-head torpedo, which may be described as a submarine missile of great force and accuracy, containing its own motive power, and exploding, on contact with its object, with force sufficient to send the proudest ironclad to the bottom—this terrible and destructive invention again seemed to give the advantage to the torpedo boat, which could discharge its bolt at a distance of four or five hundred yards, possibly undiscovered by the enemy, and, at all events, under conditions which rendered the fire of their machine-gun less certainly destructive. Then the adoption of quick-firing guns on all our ships of war increased the dangers of a torpedo attack without putting it altogether out of the question; for a torpedo boat is a small object to fire at, as it changes its position at every moment, and advances with tremendous speed, while the general flurry that is likely to prevail on board the big ship—

for men who would not quail in the deadliest sea-fight have an invincible and natural repugnance to being torpedoed—all this would be so much in favour of the venomous little adversary.

In this competitive struggle between rival methods of attack and defence Thorneycrofts have borne a distinguished part, and chiefly on the side of the torpedo boat. Mr. Thorneycroft seems to have been a born naval engineer. If he did not actually "lisp in" steam launches, anyhow the steam launches came at a very early period of his life; and from successes in the building of launches and steam yachts, in which speed, strength, and lightness were combined, and which accomplished rates of speed before deemed impossible, he turned his attention to the new class of war-vessels in which similar conditions had to be realised.

In this way the Chiswick yard became noted for leading improvements in torpedo boats. The early model, represented by No. 1 of the Royal Navy, discharged its torpedo from a frame lowered into the water alongside. But all the more recent boats are fitted with tubes—mostly fitted into the frame of the boat and opening in the bow, or, preferably, on either side of the bow. The torpedo is generally ejected from its tube by means of compressed air, after the fashion of a pea-shooter, and thus starts on its deadly mission with a good send off, but many of the Admiralty boats have their tubes adapted to receive a charge of gunpowder sufficient to effect the same object. And torpedo boat No. 100 of Her Majesty's service, which followed No. 1 in due order from the same yard, in addition to other improvements was fitted with the double rudder, adopted by the firm as the best steering gear that can be devised, a rudder working on each side of the screw propeller, and thus utilising the powerful influence of the stream of water from the propeller. In this way the little torpedo boat can swing round on its heel, as it were, the new model being able to turn in a circle with a diameter of only forty-nine yards, and also to turn astern with even greater speed and facility, so that the boat can do anything in the way of manœuvring when handled by a skilful commander.

But in these little boats, as well as in the huge cruisers, the crucial point is, after all, the boiler. That is the very heart of the ship, and if fails in its functions everything fails. In the case of the fast torpedo boats the ordinary marine

boiler was evidently inapplicable, and Thorneycrofts were the first to make use of the locomotive or tubular boiler, in which heated gases and some of the products of combustion are driven through the mass of water, as it were, by means of open tubes extending through the boiler and open to the draught of the furnace. The chief defect of this type of boilers is that the tubes are liable to give way under the great heat developed by artificial draught. Tubes would leak and boilers would "prime," that is to say they would supply hot water instead of hot steam to the machinery, which does not answer the same purpose. To remedy these defects Mr. Thorneycroft thought out and designed a boiler after his own heart, which has, in its perfected form, fully answered the requirements of fast-steaming war-ships. Yet curiously enough, the first boiler of the new model was fitted to the steamer "Peace," built by the firm for the Baptist Missionary Society for service on the Congo. The "Peace" has been recently supplemented by the "Goodwill," a charming little river boat, drawing about two feet of water and driven by a turbine propeller with a diameter of three feet, the extra foot of water being obtained by drawing it upwards in a kind of hollow-way formed in the vessel's stern.

Of a somewhat similar type were the steamers made by Thorneycrofts for the abortive Nile expedition to rescue Gordon, several of which are doing good work in Indian waters. In these days of peace the firm have also constructed excellent boats for the navigation of the great rivers of the South American continent.

Passing from the models which record the achievements of the past, a few steps bring us into the midst of the active work of the present. Here are the engineers' shops, with their beautiful and complicated machinery, where all the details are being worked out of the vessels in course of construction. Every bolt and nut, every screw and bracket, all the complicated fittings connected with guns, steering machinery, electric installations, and all the thousand minutiae of a war-ship, are here in course of preparation. Here is the foundry, with its four furnaces, ready to execute all kinds of castings—the forge, with its ponderous steam-hammers, one of which is now at work upon some great glowing mass of iron which it bangs into shape with a rapid thump, thump that shakes the solid framework of the earth beneath us. But the

clever young engineer who has us in charge does not share our enthusiasm for the steam-hammer, which he evidently regards as a barbarous kind of a relic of primeval times. "We shall soon dispense with all that thumping," he pronounces; "the quiet grip of hydraulic power will enable us to put Mr. Nasmyth out of gear."

The smithy at Thorneycroft's is a picture in itself, in the completeness and fitness of all its appointments, the glowing furnaces with their hoods, the various devices for grasping and shaping the incandescent metal. And then we have the copper-smiths' shop, where tubes, and taps, and caps, and plugs of all kinds are fashioned, all with reference to the wants of the growing sea monster, which is now dimly visible in the distance. But there is a brass-founding shop to be visited, where the multitudinous brasswork required in the fittings of smart craft of all kinds is put in hand; and there is a big bath-room, where iron tubes, and plates, and such ware are tubbed in huge pots, and come out brightened up with the surface of what is known as galvanised iron.

This brings us to the boiler shop, where we come in contact with the preparations for building up a Thorneycroft boiler for the gunboat to which we shall presently come. This boiler resembles none of the boilers of which we have before made the acquaintance. Conceive one of those vaulting-horses over which athletes delight to throw themselves, and let the body of the horse represent a strong iron cylinder. Its two fore legs, stretched rather widely apart, form two iron tubes of considerable calibre, which are connected at the top with the body cylinder, and, at the bottom, communicate each with a cylinder smaller than the other, but of the same length, which form, as it were, the base of the structure, being strongly imbedded in the outer framework. The hind legs of the horse are strong supports, which have only the function of helping to preserve rigidity. But springing from the back of the steed, in an upward curve on either side, are rows of small steel tubes, hardly larger than the ordinary service-pipes of the London water companies, touching each other laterally so as to form a series of casings about the central part, the tubes being bent round in a curious fashion just as if they were meant to encircle the horse's corpus, and then bending outward so as to join the lower cylinder in a graceful curve; while the inner row of pipes is so much bent as

actually to meet, the corresponding row of pipes on the opposite side, and thus to enclose the furnace, which, with its fire-stone casing, is naturally placed between the horse's legs.

When the boiler is worked it is filled with water as far as half the capacity of the upper cylinder. Fires are lighted, and steam is generated with marvellous rapidity, so that a working pressure can generally be obtained in about twenty minutes. At the same time, from the varied temperature of the water in cylinders and tubes, a most energetic circulation is set up and continues during the working of the boiler, while steam at high pressure is produced without unduly forcing the draught.

It is worth while spending a little time over a boiler, for the question of boilers is one that is in the air, and is a vital one as concerns naval efficiency. The Thorneycroft boiler, when combined with suitable engines, has been eminently successful in developing high rates of speed; as in the case of a boat built by the firm for the Spanish Government, the "Ariete," which on her trial at the Nore realised a speed of twenty-six knots, or over thirty miles an hour, and Thorneycrofts have just undertaken to build two boats for the British Government, which are guaranteed to attain the same wonderful speed—a mile every two minutes! These boats are intended to hunt and destroy torpedo boats belonging to the enemy, as a sharp terrier may hunt and destroy rats.

One of the results of the new form of boiler is a machine ingeniously contrived for bending steel tubes, cold steel being a rather rigid material; but the tubes are bent to any required curve by the new machine, without injuring the texture of the metal, and practically without altering the calibre of the interior of the tubes. In this case necessity has proved itself the mother of invention. "For if we were not pretty fertile in resource," says our guide, "how could we on the Thames compete with works in the North, where the raw materials of our trade, namely coal and iron, are unburdened with heavy freights?"

From the boilers to the fine ship for which they are designed is the next step—which involves a visit to the building slip with its lofty roof of corrugated iron. And there lies the "Speedy," one of Her Majesty's swift gunboats of the future, of the class known as torpedo catchers; although on the principle of setting a thief to catch a thief, they are adapted

for doing a little torpedo work themselves. To climb ladders and stages to reach the deck of a Thames boat is rather a novel sensation, and from the iron-plated deck the view of a patch of silver Thames and the green banks of the opposite shore appears on a strangely diminutive scale, in contrast with the sweeping dimensions of the new ship. Here are her dimensions and power as recorded on a board at her stern: Length, two hundred and thirty feet; beam, twenty-seven feet; displacement, eight hundred and ten tons; indicated horse-power, four thousand five hundred.

No such a ship as the "Speedy" has ever before been built and fitted on the Thames above the bridges, and much interest will attach to her launch and progress down the river. She will be launched with her engines on board, and all her fittings, excepting such projecting portions as her conning tower and funnel, which might interfere with her passage under the bridges. Her engines are constructed with all the latest improvements, and will develop more than a thousand horse-power above the other vessels of her class; and if she realises the expectations formed of her, and of the working of her Thornycroft boilers, she will form an addition to Her Majesty's fleet of which Chiswick may well be proud.

The clatter of hammers on steel plates and bolts, the reverberating sounds from the cavernous depths below, where engine-fitters are at work, and the intentness of everybody concerned on his particular business, give an idea of the labour and pains involved in building up the complicated structure of the modern war-ship. Descending to the level of the "Speedy's" keel, we are struck by the fineness and symmetry of her lines as she rests tranquilly on the slips—a veritable greyhound of the seas.

So far we have only been concerned with the outward attributes of the ship, in her speed and strength, but she has also her life of the interior. She will have officers, petty officers, and seamen on board, not utterly regardless of their personal comforts, and a good deal of writing up of logs and filling up of forms will go on within that warlike casing. Well, everything is at hand. All the woodwork is made upon the premises, in an establishment kept distinct from the works in steel and iron. Here are circular saws at work, with ribbon saws and others, that slice

a log into planks almost before the traditional "Robinson" can be invoked, with machines for morticing, for planing, for cutting mouldings, and some which combine a number of these operations in one.

Occupying a considerable space in an upper workshop are the cabin fittings of the "Speedy," all in polished mahogany, and with the finish and accurate workmanship of first class cabinetwork. Yet how those elegant-looking berths will creak and groan and make melancholy music when the stormy winds do blow, and it is distressing to think what havoc a stray shell might make in these cosily furnished little apartments.

Such considerations do not, however, trouble the foreman of the works. Like everything else on board ship, cabin furniture must take its chance in the fortunes of war. The effects of peace are more to be dreaded, such as lying up in a dock basin in the dull atmosphere of an idle iron ship, with dampness pervading every nook and corner. "Why," says the foreman, with a touch of professional feeling, "I don't believe there's a drawer will open in the whole Steam Reserve!" This is a novel view of the shortcomings of the British Navy, and visions present themselves of a state visit from the Admiral, and the Captain struggling in vain to get out his best clothes. But things are better, judges the foreman, when a ship is put into commission; the engine fires warm her up, dampness flies before their glowing influence, drawers may now be opened, desks may now be unlocked. And very handsome are the fittings of office and chart room, and everything works well, and doubtless will pass with credit through future trials, even if destined to join for a time the Steam Reserve.

We have now completed the circuit of the yard, and cannot help feeling a glow of pride on behalf of Father Thames, that such a complete establishment capable of turning out such beautiful, swift, and deadly craft, should be found on these familiar shores. Even those who do not like torpedo boats in themselves, will be ready to admit that it is an essential factor in our naval supremacy that we should have the best and fastest of their kind, and plenty of them; and that whatever our superiority in monster line-of-battle ships, it might prove a fatal mistake to neglect the craft which, within certain limits, give the maximum of

offensive and defensive power at the minimum in expenditure of war matériel and of human life.

BIRD SUPERSTITIONS AND CURIOSITIES.

IN TWO PARTS. PART II.

THE magpie is, by almost universal consent, considered to be a bird of ill omen. In Germany and the north of Europe it is believed that witches often transform themselves into its shape, or use it as their steed. In Scotland, the magpie is sometimes called the devil's bird, and is believed to have a drop of the devil's blood in its tongue. The country people of Oldenberg consider the magpie to be so imbued with satanic principles that if a cross be cut in the tree in which it has built its nest, the female will desert the nest at once. There are several reasons ascribed for this bird's bad reputation, one of them being that she was the only bird which would not go into the ark with Noah and his folks, but liked better to perch on the roof and jabber over the drowning world. The appearance of a magpie is, according to popular belief, something of mysterious import, and various practices are adopted in different localities to avert the ill luck that would otherwise ensue. In some parts, however—in Shropshire, for instance, and throughout Norway—magpies are considered harbingers of good luck. As an instance of the opposite lights in which the magpie is regarded, may be mentioned the belief in the Tyrol, that broth in which the bird has been boiled, will make him who drinks it crazy. On the other hand, the pastor of a church near Dresden is reputed to have cured several epileptic patients by the same savoury drink.

In his "Salmonia," Sir Humphry Davy says: "For anglers in spring it is always unlucky to see single magpies; but two may be always regarded as a favourable omen; and the reason is that in cold and stormy weather one magpie alone leaves the nest in search of food, the other remaining sitting upon the eggs or the young ones; but when two go out together it is only when the weather is warm and mild and favourable for fishing."

Grose, however, goes more fully into the subject, and says: "It is unlucky to see first one magpie and then more; but to see two denotes marriage or merriment, three a successful journey, four an unex-

pected piece of good news, and five a company of good friends."

There is a very ancient superstition which says that when you see a magpie you should cross yourself; if you do not you will be unlucky for the rest of the day, or in what you are about to undertake. The peasantry of Lancashire, on seeing one or more magpies, thus sum up their luck:

One for anger, two for mirth,
Three for a wedding, four for a birth,
Five for rich, six for poor,
Seven for a witch; I can tell you no more.

In some parts of Devonshire the more superstitious of the peasantry, when scared by a single magpie, avert the omen by repeating this charm:

Clean birds by sevens,
Unclean by twos;
The dove in the heavens
Is the one I choose.

In Yorkshire the charm is broken by the raising of the hat at a single magpie. In some parts of Northumberland it is nothing unusual to hear the following couplet on seeing one or more magpies:

One is sorrow, two is mirth,
Three is a wedding, four is a birth,
Five heaven, six hell,
Seven, the devil's ain sel.

Another version of the same rhyme, peculiar to Suffolk, I believe, runs as follows:

One for sorrow, two for joy,
Three for a wedding, four for a birth.

And there the enumeration ends. In Wales and the midland counties I have frequently heard this version:

One for sorrow, two for joy,
Three for a girl and four for a boy.

The latter evidently has reference to the prospect of a birth in the family of the person who sees four, within a very short period. In Wensleydale they say of both the magpie and the raven:

One for sorrow, two for luck,
Three for a wedding, four for a death,
Five for silver, six for gold,
Seven for a bonny lass twenty years old.

To dream of a magpie indicates that you will soon be married, but that you will lose your partner before you have been married five years. If you dream of seeing two magpies, you will be twice married and twice a widow. To dream of three magpies forebodes the death of your wife in childbed, and also the death of the child.

The raven lives to so great an age that the ancients believed the time allotted to it was twenty-seven times that of a man.

Jewish authors tell strange stories of this bird—that it was originally white, and was turned black for its deceitful conduct; also, that it flies crooked because it was cursed by Noah. There is a widespread belief that the appearance of the raven prognosticates death. In Denmark its appearance in a village is considered an indication that the parish priest will soon die. In Andalusia, if it is heard croaking over a house, an unlucky day is expected; repeated thrice, it is a fatal presage; if perching high, turning and croaking, a corpse will soon come from that direction.

Alexander Ross states that "Private men have been forewarned of their death by ravens. I have not only heard and read, but have likewise observed divers times. A late example I have of a young gentleman, Mr. Draper, my intimate friend, who, about five or six years ago, being then in the flower of his age, had, on a sudden, one or two ravens in his chamber, which had been quarrelling on the top of the chimney; these he apprehended as messengers of his death, and so they were; for he died shortly after."

Macaulay says: "In Greece and Italy ravens were sacred to Apollo, the great patron of augurs, and were called companions of that god. . . . According to some writers a great number of crows fluttered about Cicero's head on the very day he was murdered by the ungrateful Popilius Laenas, as if to warn him of his approaching fate; and that one of them, after having made his way into his chamber, pulled away his bedclothes from a solicitude for his safety."

To work continuously for a long period without sleep and without fatigue, the one thing needful, says an old quack, is to get a raven's heart and carry it about the person. The moment it leaves the person's possession the charm ceases to work. The following is an old recipe for making one's self invisible: Destroy a raven's nest, first taking out the eggs. The parent raven will fly off and bring a stone in its beak, presumably to mark the spot where the nest was. Returning after an interval, you will pick up the stone, which is always small and square, and every time you place it on your head you will become invisible.

An anecdote of a legendary form is told of one Thomas Elkes, of Middle, Shropshire, who was supposed to be persecuted by ravens. This Elkes was left guardian to his eldest brother's child, and knowing that in the event of the child's death he

would become heir to a considerable sum of money, wickedly enticed the poor boy to a distance from his home under pretence of gathering field flowers, and threw him into a pond adjoining one of the fields, where he was drowned. No sooner had Elkes committed the fatal deed than he began to be watched and followed by two ravens, who hovered near him and his dwelling from that moment. Suspicion being at length excited, and strict enquiry made after the child, Elkes fled, and took the road to London. Two horsemen were sent in pursuit of him, and as they passed along the road near South Mimms, Hertfordshire, they saw two ravens pulling at a heap of hay and making an unusual noise. Turning aside to ascertain the cause, they found Elkes concealed beneath the hay, and having secured him they took him to Shrewsbury, where he was tried, condemned, and hung in chains on Knockenheath.

Marlowe, in his "Jew of Malta," published in 1633, thus alludes to the common belief regarding the raven:

Like the sad presaging raven that tolls
The sick man's passport in her hollow beak,
And, in the shadow of the silent night,
Does shake contagion from her sable wing.

So also Gay in his "Pastorals":

The boding raven on her cottage sat,
And with hoarse croakings warned us of our fate.

Respecting the former whiteness of the raven's plumage, Addison has a reference to a curious legend of the raven. It is that one day a raven told Apollo that Coronis, a Thessalian nymph whom he passionately loved, was faithless, and the god shot the nymph with his dart; but hating the tell-tale bird, as Addison says,

He blacked the raven o'er,
And bid him prate in his white plumes no more.

To dream that you see a raven is a very unfavourable omen, denoting mischief and adversity. In love, it shows falsehood; to the married it forebodes much mischief; to the sailor it foretells of shipwreck and much distress on a foreign shore.

If ravens croak two or three times and flap their wings, fine weather is expected. On the other hand their quiet is an indication of continued fine weather. In Smart's "Hop Garden," we have this:

Next hark
How the curst raven, with her harmless voice,
Invokes the rain, and croaking to herself,
Struts on some spacious solitary shore.

According to the Athenian Oracle, "When a flock of ravens forsake the woods we may look for famine and mortality, because ravens bear the characteristics of Saturn, the author of these calamities, and have a very early perception of the bad disposition of that planet."

In Christian art the raven is employed as an emblem of the providence of God, in allusion to the manner in which He fed Elijah. Saint Oswald holds in his hand a raven with a ring in its mouth; Saint Benedict has a raven at his feet; Saint Paul the Hermit is drawn with a raven bringing him a loaf of bread.

In folk-lore, the crow always appears as a bird of the most sinister character, representing either death, or night, or winter. The Hindoos believe, on the other hand, that to eat a crow will prolong life by keeping the hair black and preventing it turning grey. In German Switzerland it is believed that a crow perching on the roof of a house in which lies a corpse, is a sign that the soul of the dead is irrevocably lost. In Sussex its cry thrice repeated is considered a sure token of death. The Somalis, who inhabit the shores of the Red Sea, wage deadly warfare against the crow, which, they affirm, was created white, but which in an evil hour betrayed the hiding-place of the Prophet by an untimely croak. For this offence he cursed the bird of ill omen, and it became black, since which time it has shared the fate of all creatures when down in their luck, and has been mercilessly hooted and pecked at and destroyed.

The crow is called by Pliny a bird of ill-omened garrulity, most inauspicious at the time of incubation or just after the summer solstice. The appearance of a flight of crows upon the left of their camp sufficed to cow the courage of the soldiers of old Rome, since they looked upon it as a certain sign of defeat, as certain as when the birds hovered over their standards. So Shakespeare's Cassius presages misfortune at Philippi:

Ravens, crows, and kites
Fly o'er our heads, and downward look on us
As we were sickly prey: these shadows seem
A canopy most fatal, under which
Our army lies, ready to give up the ghost.

The Cingalese to this day draw auguries from the movements of these birds; the direction of their flight, the numbers in which they assemble, the tone in which they croak, their choice of roosting-places, all are held ominous of evil or prophetic of good fortune.

There are, perhaps, few who have not heard of crows that "One is lucky, two is unlucky, three is health, four is wealth, five sickness, and six death." The unluckiness of one living crow is of ancient date, since the Greeks believed that if such a bird appeared at a wedding breakfast there would be a divorce, to avert which all roared out: "Maiden, scare away the crow!" But of far greater antiquity was the belief that if the one crow were dead the evil portent also perished, since, according to Horus Apollo—"Hierog." ii. 39—it signified extreme old age, or a very long life, according to what Hesiod tells us, as quoted by Plutarch in his "Oracles," that the crow lives nine times as long as a man. The belief that two crows are a happy omen, and that they appear to warn men from disaster, is very ancient. Alexander the Great was thus saved in Egypt by two crows, and King Alonzo would assuredly have perished in 1147 had it not been for two crows, one of which perched on the prow and the other on the stern of his ship, so pointing the prow of the royal barge safely into port. Crows and rooks are very much alike. It is said that when rooks desert a rookery it forebodes the downfall of the family on whose property it is. They are also credited with being good weather prognosticators. When the weather is about to be very bad they stay as near home as possible; but when they foreknow that it will be set fair, they start off in the morning right away to a distance, where they have an instinct that the food they need is plentiful. Again, if the rooks are seen venturing into the streets of a town or village, it is a sure sign of an approaching snowstorm.

To dream you see a crow signifies expedition of business; if you hear them croaking unpleasantly while they are flying it is a sign of ill luck. If you see in your dream the crow flying on to the head of a child, it will be in danger of some misfortune.

Another bird, which is an emblem of death, is the sweet-toned blackbird. There is a legend which I heard whilst in Wales, to the effect that a family in Carmarthen were one day seated in the parlour, where was lying an invalid on the sofa, when they were greatly surprised at the appearance of a bird similar in size and colour to a blackbird, which hopped into the room, went up to the invalid, and after perching on the sofa started out immediately. What appears very strange, a day or two after, the sick person died. A bird of the same

kind flew to a window at Penrygaig, as if it wanted to enter a room where a person was lying ill. Although those in the room endeavoured several times to frighten it away, the bird would not go. That night the sick person departed this life.

The phrase, "a white blackbird," is anomalous and incorrect, and does no credit to the present state of the English vernacular. A white crow or a white raven are epithets which do not jar upon the ear; but a white blackbird is distressing to the logical accuracy of the statement. The beautiful bird to which we give the name of black, par excellence, has no more right to it than the crow or the raven, the daw, or even the eagle. The old name of the songster, that still survives in some modern poetry, was "merle." A "white merle" would be a more graceful and more appropriate designation than a white blackbird, for one of those apparent freaks of nature which we sometimes see and hear of. There are numerous instances of these white birds being shot or otherwise captured. In one nest at Faversham, in 1886, two white and two black merles were found.

The owl has always been held to be the emblem of wisdom by some, and by others an object of detestation and dread. The cry of the screech-owl at night in rural districts is said to presage death. Should one of these birds screech while flying over a house, death is sure to follow. Especially is this the case if in the house there happens to be a sick person. Indeed, the owl is believed to be

The hateful messenger of heavy things,
Of death and dolour telling.

In an early volume of English plays, Reed, the dramatist, quotes a familiar superstition which prevailed throughout the country in his time, that,

When the screech-owl croaks upon the chimney
tops
It's certain that you of a corpse shall hear.

Alexander Ross gives credence to this belief in his appendix to the "Arcana Microcosmi," in which he tells us that "Lampridius and Marcellinus, among other prodigies which presaged the death of the Emperor Valentinian, mention an owl which sat upon the top of the house where he used to bathe, and could not thence be driven away with stones." Another writer states that "Shortly before the death of the Emperor Commodus Antonius an owl was observed to sit on the top of his chamber both at Rome and at Lanuvium."

Berthelet, writing of this bird, says: "Divynours telle that they betokeyn evyll; for if the owle be seen in a cite, it signyfeth distruccon and waste as Isidore sayeth. The cryinge of the owle by nyght tokeneth deathe, as divynours coniect and deme."

It is said that two enormous owls premonish the noble family of Arundel of Wardour of approaching, if not imminent, mortality. Whenever these two solemn spectres are seen on a battlement of the family mansion it is well known that one of its members will soon be summoned out of this world. Rowland, satirising the belief, said in his "More Knaves Yet":

Wise goaling did but hear the screech owle crie,
And told his wife, and straight a pigge did die.

Shakespeare, in his play of "Hamlet," makes Ophelia exclaim: "They say the owl was a baker's daughter," alluding to an apocryphal legend which was believed in the Middle Ages, and which came all the way from Palestine, that a baker's daughter who refused a piece of bread to the Saviour was, as a punishment, transformed into an owl. Willsford informs us that "owls whooping after sunset and in the night foreshows a fine day to ensue; but if she names herself in French, 'huette,' expect then fickle and inconstant weather, but most usually rain." Another authority states that owls before a storm keep up a terrible to-whooping. According to an old proverb,

Owls that mark the setting sun declare
A starlight evening and a morning fair.

There is a choice recipe, in which the owl figures, to "make any one that sleepeth answer to whatsoever thou ask," given in "Physick for the Poor," published in London in 1657. It says that you are to "take the heart of an owle and his left leg, and put that upon the breast of one that sleepeth, and they shall reveal whatsoever thou shall ask them." The Hindoos, however, declare that the flesh or blood of an owl will make a person insane who drinks or eats it. On this account men who are devoured by jealousy of a rival, or hated of an enemy, come furtively to the market and purchase an owl. In silence they carry it home and secretly prepare a decoction, which an accomplice will put into the food or drink of the object of their malignant designs.

It has been said that all poets, ancient and modern—Shakespeare alone excepted—bestow a melancholy epithet on the

owl. Gray's moping owl "doth to the moon complain." Thomson shows "assiduous in her bower the walling owl." Shakespeare gives the true picture, when he makes Lennox say, after the murder of Duncan: "The obscure bird clamoured the livelong night," for the owl sleeps and hisses in the day, and at night hunts and screeches. "Hooting" is not its general mode of expression nor its vernacular. A friend of Mr. White, in Hampshire, tried all the owls in his neighbourhood with a pitch-pipe, and found them to hoot in B flat. But taste or capacity varies in the family, for the owls of Selborne range between G flat, F sharp, B flat, and A flat. The enquiring naturalist, who has given fame to that charming village, once heard two owls hooting at each other in different keys.

To dream of the owl at night is said to be a very bad omen, foretelling sickness, poverty, and imprisonment. It also forewarns that some male friend of the dreamer will turn out perfidious. After dreaming of an owl, young people are warned never to expect to marry the present object of their choice or to succeed in their present undertakings.

Humboldt, in his "Travels in South America," records a visit paid by him to Cripe, where is the cavern of the guacharo bird. The name which the cavern bears is the "Mine of Fat," because from the young of the birds which inhabit it an immense quantity of fat is annually obtained. These birds are about the size of our common fowl, with wings which expand to three feet and a half. All day long they dwell in the cavern, and, like the owl, only come forth at night. They subsist entirely on fruits, and have very powerful beaks, which are necessary to crack the rough nuts and reeds which form part of their food. Midsummer is the harvest time for the fat. The Indians enter the cavern armed with long poles. The nests are attached to holes in the roof about sixty feet above their heads; they break these with the poles, and the young birds fall down and are instantly killed. Underneath their bodies is a layer of fat, which is cut off, and is the object sought. At the mouth of the cavern huts are erected of palm-leaves, and there, in pots of clay, the natives melt the fat which has been collected.

This is known as the butter of the guacharo. It is so pure that it may be kept for upwards of a year without be-

coming rancid. At the Convent of Carife no other oil is used in the kitchen of the monks.

"A DIME SOCIAL."

A WESTERN SKETCH.

THE Ladies' Church Sewing Society in our little town out West was "plum busted!" There were no available funds for the building of the new church on Wild Cherry Creek, and the Parsonage roof required new shingles, so we met to discuss ways and means to raise a few dollars. Many things were thought of—a bazaar, but we were all too miserably poor to stock a stall; an oyster celebration, but the necessary funds were not forthcoming. Something would have to be done, that was certain, for not only was the present building terribly out of repair, and the Parsonage roof letting in the water, but Mrs. Byrne, the pastor's wife, told a melancholy tale of how, whenever "it stormed any," the rain came in upon her bed and saturated her "limbs"—she was far too modest to call them legs! So at last we determined upon a "dime social," with, so as to give the Sewing Society no expense, a "basket supper."

"You see, ma'am," said Mrs. Gardner, one of the store people's wives, when some of the ladies objected to the idea of a dance—for there is a good deal of the "Mayflower" settlers left in some of the older inhabitants of the Far West—"if you'll give the boys a good time, I guess they'll find the dollars," for it was fully understood we were to make all we could out of the pockets of the opposite sex, "and the young folk conclude 'to like nothing so much as a dance!" In spite of some feeble objections on the part of a few members belonging to the society, the resolution was carried nem. con., and three parties of two girls were told off to go round the town selling tickets, whilst two of the elder ladies said they would go and try and coax Judge Craig to loan us the Court House for the evening. Indeed, at first there was rather a conflict as to whether we should dance there or get the loan of the new Roman Catholic chapel that was just finished, but had, needless to say, never yet been consecrated.

However, public opinion, I was glad to find, ran with my own feelings in favour of the Court House, and the minister's lady and Mrs. Doctor Orton set out to

interview the Judge upon the subject, whilst the younger members of the society ran across to the dry goods store and coaxed the manager of it to give them several cardboard boxes, which they cut up into neat squares the size of a visiting card. Then we got pen and ink and wrote upon each card, in our very best handwriting, thus:

"Dime Church Social,
"Admit Two,
"Basket Dance."

We were still hard at work, busy finishing these, when the two ladies appeared from their interview with the Judge. They had been successful, and joy beamed upon their faces—at least, upon that of Mrs. Doctor Orton—for not only had the Judge loaned them the floor, but had even offered, for ten dollars the night, to play the fiddle for the dancers!

"Though I du think," Mrs. Byrne added plaintively, "that, considering the 'Social' went towards his own pastor, he might have given his services!"

The poor lady felt a twinge in her "limb" at the moment evidently, and thought that the ten dollars would go far towards repairing the shingles on the Parsonage roof.

"Now I du call that real ungrateful of you, ma'am," responded the Doctor's wife, between whom and Mrs. Byrne there was a slight feud and strained relations, owing to a letter of the latter's, from her friends back east, having been lost in the post—our Doctor adding to his income by running the post office. "Judge wouldn't have loaned the floor without the fiddle—'tain't in reason. An' I du not call it consistent in a minister's lady to be so grasping arter the meat that perisheth."

Here, as the argument threatened to become warm, some mutual friends interfered and turned the conversation to the "Basket Supper"; and I, being a "tenderfoot," had to be informed all about it, and it certainly was quite a new idea to me.

It seemed that, although the ladies had no expenses in the way of tickets, each one invited by a "boy" to the dance was expected to provide supper for two, and bring it with her in a basket, which she made as pretty as she could; indeed, often made the basket itself out of cardboard, and trimmed it up with lace and ribbons till it was a thing of beauty and a joy for ever.

It was not to be supposed, however, that the lady and her favoured swain always partook of the supper she had provided. Nothing of the sort usually took place! All the baskets ticketed with the name of the owner were given to the gentleman who "took the floor"—in other words, the M.C. of the evening—and when supper-time came, he, or one of his friends, held an auction of the baskets, which were, one by one, knocked down to the highest bidder, who then had the honour of inviting the fair lady whose basket he had bought to have supper with him.

A price was placed upon each ticket by the owner of the basket, and it was considered etiquette for the gentleman whose invited guest she was to begin bidding for it at that figure. Of course, if she was his "best girl," that is to say, engaged to him, no one usually bid higher; but in the case of a very attractive or pretty girl, where he would have many rivals, the bidding would wax fast and furious; indeed, I have known a basket, when times were good, run up to as much as twenty dollars, the price of an ordinary cow. If the boy whom the lady favoured was down on his luck, she would price her basket very low indeed, and no one usually interfered with his having it at her price; but, of course, there were exceptions to this rule.

Needless to say, all the money thus collected was given to the church; but it is not to be supposed that the parson had the handling of the dollars even then, for a committee was formed to arrange for the necessary repairs, and anything that was over was all that Mr. Byrne saw of the coin; so that, of course, he and his family devoutly hoped that the job would be done as cheaply as possible, and no extra expenditure indulged in. It must be said for the "boys" that they bought the tickets with alacrity, and hired all the available buggies they could get hold of to drive their girls across in—those of them, at least, who invited ranch girls—and as each boy only took one girl, it will easily be seen that there were an equal number of ladies and gentlemen. And the ranch girls somehow seemed the most popular, much to the chagrin of their city sisters, for, sad to relate, small as our society was, it was very full of cliques, and each and all thought small of the others, and would outdo them if they could on every possible occasion. Especially did the store folk look down upon the ranch people, for no earthly reason that I could find out, except that the store folk dressed

a little smarter and put their washing out; whilst the ranch people did theirs at home and—wished they didn't. However, to me both store and ranch folk were the kindest and most obliging friends, and often they have come over, out of pure kindness of heart to the ranch, to "help the English gal fix up things." The Basket Supper, however, weighed much upon my mind, so I consulted Ella Sanborn, a ranch friend, as to what it was usual to stock the basket with, and felt greatly relieved when she told me that sandwiches and cake, a pot of jelly, and some fruit, were all that were required at my hands.

No one took anything to drink, for two of the city members of the Sewing Society provided tea and coffee at five cents the cup, and if the menfolk wanted anything else they got it outside at the saloon, for ours was not a prohibition town, which usually meant, in the case of the few cities that were so in that State, that two flourishing saloons were erected at each boundary of the town, and the male inmates of that city took frequent strolls!

Then the important dress question came into my mind, and I asked what the girls wore, and was told "something light, and 'their necks dressed with lace and artificial flowers." I, innocently enough, felt happy on that point, for did I not possess a demi-toilette black lace, which I fondly thought would be quite the thing?

The eventful evening came at last, one being chosen on which there was a full moon on purpose to suit the ranch people who had a long distance to travel. I had duly received an invitation to go with a ranchman from a neighbouring farm, and saw my own two boys off early—one rejoicing in the family buggy, and the other in the buck-board, in which we took the cream in to the creamery—to fetch Ella Sanborn and her sister Maisie.

My basket was packed, and I felt quite proud of it, having constructed it out of an old Zulu hat I had, and trimmed it up with sage-green ribbons and trails of bright-green killkinic—the herb which the Indians often smoke—and made a big handle to it of the willows that grew in the creek near by. It really looked very pretty. My frock, I was vain enough to think, became me well enough also; certainly it was only a black lace, with a tiny V in front, and short sleeves, and therefore very quiet-looking; but where you do not know the manners and customs

of a country it is better to be under than over-dressed, as the sequel will show.

Dick Curtis came in time to have a cup of tea before we started, which we thoroughly enjoyed knowing that the only tea we should get was uncoloured Japan—a mixture I never got used to and could not drink. But there would be coffee—Arbuckle coffee, which was very good once you got what the Americans called "AC-climated" to it. We started very shortly after tea, first putting the lamp and matches in safety, and shutting the house-dog inside the shanty as a terror to evil-doers, and depositing the door-key under the window-ledge in a safe place we all knew of, in case the boys should come home first.

Then we made up for lost time, and "loped" across the prairie in fine style, exchanging greetings with the waggons and buggies we passed, all of them, like ourselves, on pleasure bent. The Court House was already lighted up when we arrived at the little town. We took a peep in, and there were six of the boys solemnly pacing up and down the room, each with a long tallow dip in his hand, which he was whittling all over the floor.

"Looks kind of slippery," said Dick, with much gusto, and I thought it smelt "sort of greasy," also, as it was illuminated solely with flaring tallow candles, each stuck into a lager beer bottle.

Not exactly one's beau ideal of a ball-room, for decoration, save the guttering dips, and a long row of wooden benches against the wall, it had none. However, these were but minor matters, and we had all made up our minds to enjoy ourselves, and have "a good time." So Dick and I drove on to the Owen House next door, where we were going to put up, and Mrs. Owen kindly asked me in to take off my wraps and "do my prinking an' fixing up." I found many of the other girls in the room also, pinning on a bow here, and arranging a curl there; but when I had taken my cloak off, they all turned round and looked at me with a big "Oh!"

I stared in blank astonishment. What could be the matter? Was my dress torn, or what? But I was soon enlightened, and found that they considered my V-cut body and short sleeves the height of indelicacy, and evidently thought me most immodest to appear in such a frock.

Really, as I looked at them I began to feel all arms and neck, and very uncomfortable, even whilst my mind ran to a

certain trunk in which, in its glory of satin and lace, reposed a real ball dress, low-cut body and all, and my lips gave an involuntary twitch as I faintly realised how great the sensation would have been had I appeared in that! However, if the girls were shocked, they were equally good-natured, and one of them offered to lend me her new silk waist. I accepted the loan of it with gratitude, for I had no wish to shock my friends again, or to feel uncomfortable myself. So she kindly ran home and fetched it; it fitted very fairly, and, anyway, I did not feel peculiar and out of the common in it, and much preferred it to my own, as I felt I was too insignificant a person to set the fashion.

The girls were delighted to see me clothed like themselves, and wanted very much to "dress my neck up."

I looked around at them all, and at last grasped what "a light dress with lace and flowers" meant. In England evening dress is a low neck and sleeves, but the Western belle, instead of uncovering her neck and arms, dresses them up more than usual. Each girl wore what I should call a summer frock made high, with the neck swathed round by lace of different shades, and finished off at the side with a huge bunch of artificial flowers. But I struck at this, gratefully as I had accepted the "waist," so was allowed a lace tucker and my string of Roman pearls instead, Ella remarking sadly:

"You don't look fixed up at all!"

Then the different "baskets" were inspected, and mine pronounced "real cute;" they had all done theirs most cleverly, I thought, many of them being contrived out of cardboard, and trimmed up very prettily. Here also I learnt the astonishing fact that no programmes were ever used, and when I asked how you remembered your different partners, they all laughed aloud.

"My! You are a tenderfoot!" cried Myra Selden, a pretty, bright girl of sixteen. "But, Land's sake, how should you know? Why, you dance with your own boy, of course."

"All the evening!" I gasped.

"Jes' so; except for the grand march. Why, girls, she looks as if she'd like to fire Dick before the dance was over!"

At this there was much laughter, and all of us being ready, we rushed in a crowd to the Court House, and seated ourselves breathlessly upon the benches.

Presently Judge Craig came in, and

mounting the little platform at the end of the room, began to tune up the fiddle, which was a signal to the boys to come in in another crowd.

Then Burt Harris "took the floor," i.e., acted as master of the ceremonies, an office which was, as will be seen, no sinecure, and brought up the different boys who wanted introductions for the grand march.

There was no chance of not catching the name of the man who was introduced to you in the Far West, for Burt brought him up to you, and said in a loud voice, "Mr. Bates—Miss Grey," whereupon it was the proper thing for both of us to bow and shake hands, whilst the gentleman repeated in an audible tone, "Miss Grey?" and I myself, equally loudly, "Mr. Bates!"

Then the grand march began, and we all walked hand in hand round the Court House to the inspiring strains of Judge Craig's fiddle.

Dear me! Time went back, and I was a little girl at dancing class. I fully expected to hear, "Turn de toes out, young lady, and hold up de head," every moment; only instead of being small children we were grown men and women, marching solemnly round a greasy floor, and the scene was lighted up by flaring tallow dips in glass bottles, with wicks that already much needed snuffing.

However, it gave one time to look round and admire the different costumes of the "boys." Some wore European tweed suits, not a few were in regular cowboy outfit, and these last I think looked the best; but where some attempt had been made at evening dress, as in the case of a gentleman who had compromised matters by putting on a tail coat over a red shirt and a pair of blue overalls, the effect was more easily seen than described. Take them all in all, however, they were a fine-looking set of fellows, big and tall, and all seemed enjoying themselves in a solemn sort of way, whilst the girls all looked uncommonly pretty and happy.

The march being over, Burt Harris shouted out, "Take your partners, gentlemen, for a quadrille," went up on the platform beside the Judge, and "took the floor" again, which meant, in this case, giving out all the different figures.

This he did with great promptitude and quickness, and our original partners having claimed us, we began to dance to a tune composed of a mixture of "The Star-Spangled Banner," "Sally come up the Middle," and "The Girl I left behind

me." The figures bewildered me, I knew hardly any of them, only it seemed to me that every two or three minutes Burt called out "A la maine right," and whatever that meant we all did a kind of grand chain. Another movement which seemed to afford the boys the greatest satisfaction, I suppose from the rare chance of getting hold of another man's partner, was that whenever the refrain of "The Girl I left behind me" came in, which it did pretty frequently, they all began to chant solemnly to its music these words, "Then turn that girl, that pretty little girl, the girl you'll find behind you," and then waltzed round several times with the next "boy's" partner.

It must be said that all the girls and boys danced beautifully, though where they got the chance of lessons who can tell? I noticed this during the "Newport," a dance called after a celebrated American watering-place.

When the first part of the programme was danced through there was a pause, and two of the boys disappeared to return with a couple of tin pails full of cold water, and a tin dipper with a long handle in each; and to my astonishment came round to all the girls and asked them to have a drink, at which invitation we all had a dipper full out of the pail.

The Western girl did not seem to me to have half the fun at a dance her Eastern sister did, for there were no alcoves provided in which she could sit out, or anywhere where she could indulge in a flirtation, if so inclined. Only, as a matter of course, no one ever sat out any dance. It was a wonder to me how they did it when one remembered that most of them had been up since five that morning, and working all through the day.

All sorts and conditions of men and women were there, from the two girls, who were "hired helps" at the Owen House, and Effie Walters, the washerlady's daughter, to the Hon. Miss O'Hagan, the daughters of the Member for the county. All these girls seemed perfectly good friends, and called each other by their Christian names. There seemed, amongst the girls, at least, no looking down on any one because of their daily work.

Presently supper time came, and the ubiquitous Burt Harris began to "auction" the baskets—alphabetically; so Annie Adlum's came first. As Annie was a very pretty girl—quite the belle of the party—her basket, which she had priced at a

dollar and a half, soon ran up, and was knocked down to Ed. O'Hagan for ten dollars—much, I fancy, to the chagrin of Annie and her "boy."

But then he was only the Judge's hired man, at twenty dollars the month and his keep, and prudence forbade his giving half his monthly wage for it. There was also a keen competition for the baskets known to belong to clever cooks, and some of these also realised very high prices.

As for mine, whether it was they doubted my culinary skill, or whether my personal attractions did not "catch on," I know not, but it was, after a short competition, knocked down to Dick for two dollars and a half, and we retired to the bench to thankfully discuss its contents. The tea and coffee were served round in thick white cups without handles or saucers; spoons handed round in one glass vase, and beetroot sugar in another—we never could get lump nearer than Denver.

There was one more dance after supper, and then the boys got the different buggies and were ready to go home. It was getting about time, too; the candle ends were burning out and guttering down the necks of the bottles, and looking red and flickering in the moonbeams streaming through the high, uncurtained windows of the Court House. The Judge's instrument was groaning out "Way down upon the Swanee Ribber" in very uncertain strains. We had evidently had our ten dollars' worth of music; it was time the Social broke up.

So each "boy" tucked his partner into his buggy and we started home. It did not take many moments to get free of the town and over the Platte, at that time of year a sandy gulch, with a six-inch stream in the middle; and then came the Denver and Rio Grande track to be crossed. Here we pulled up, as we heard the whistle and cow-horn of an advancing train, and saw a number of cow brutes bound off the ties as the 1.50 Pulman came tearing round a curve, the smoke and flame from its smoke stack flying up into the clear midnight sky, up it seemed to meet the Great Bear, which, of course, was lying on its back towards us.

Then we loped away home, reaching the shanty about three a.m., and I said good-bye to Dick and went to bed, leaving the lamp ready lighted for the boys who would be still later. In another three hours the work of the day would begin again for all of us; the cows would have to be milked, the chores done, the fire lighted, and the breakfast cooked; but for three long, beau-

tiful hours there would be sleep and rest, tired out as we were with the toil and pleasure of the past day.

THE LATE MRS. VERNON.

By A. MOBERLY.

Author of "Lady Valeria," etc., etc.

CHAPTER III.

A CORNER of sky, a rustling bough of a plane-tree, and above it the angle of a roof with a sparrow chirping in the gutter. A London sky, and bird, and tree, unmistakably. I watched them languidly for some time before I let my eyes travel farther. I saw them through a window, and the window was in the softly tinted wall of a room which I did not try to recognise. There was a dressing-table, and a young woman in a blue print gown, standing with her back to me, looking at herself in the glass. She moved away, but it troubled me to follow her, and I sank back again into the comfortable soft cloud of darkness out of which I had come when I opened my eyes.

It was not sleep; for though I was fed and tended it never woke me. Sometimes, at rare intervals, I knew what they were doing. Sometimes I heard voices round me, and was aware that something comforting was being done to my poor dazed head; but I never tried to look at them or speak. Once I woke with a start. I was back again at the Tarrants'; I had overslept myself, and Tottie was waiting for me to brush her hair and fasten her frock, and Algy was whimpering in his cot. But the familiar dirty yellow walls and towering pile of lumber in the corner were not to be seen. The room was lofty, silent, and airy. A woman—not the same I had seen before, but in the same sort of dress—was writing at a table near by a shaded light. Where was I, and what had happened? I began to try to think about it a little, but fell asleep before I had got very far.

It was broad daylight when I woke in earnest. The room had lost its strangeness now, and I looked about it quite composedly. Something was stirring in it. A young girl was sitting at the table in the window, busy with her work. She was very pleasant to look at, I thought, so I lay quiet and watched her. She had nice pink cheeks and dancing, inattentive blue eyes, and light curly hair that grew up on one side of her forehead and down

on the other. Her sewing amused me mightily. She was settling the frillings of a cap like the one she wore on her head, running a thread into the border to keep them in position. Her cotton was twice too long. It tangled and knotted, and caught on the stiff muslin edges at every stitch.

Then she bit it off and started afresh with an end manifestly insufficient, which brought her up short in the middle of her border. She muttered a cheerful "Oh, bother!" twitched it out and prepared to start again with another great long needleful. The cotton-reel was at her teeth when she caught sight of me. She gave a jump and dropped it, and came running to the bedside to look at me.

I smiled, and she smiled in return, but with a comical look of perplexity on her face. She made for the door hurriedly and came back again. Then she extended her hand towards some medicine that stood near and withdrew it again. Then she looked at me as if she hoped I were going to say or do something. I longed to speak, to ask who she was, and what it all meant, but I was too weary, in fact, my eyes closed before I ever discovered what she did do eventually.

I heard two voices talking over me some time later. I knew my nurse's by instinct. She was very cross about something.

"He's a positive pig-headed old donkey, and as jealous of Dr. Miller as he can be. Of course, he wouldn't believe me. I said, 'I beg your pardon, Dr. Walsham, she was as sensible as I am this minute.'"

"And what did he say to that?"

"Oh, you know his nasty sneering way. 'I don't dispute that for one minute, Nurse Magrath,' and then looked quite astonished at the smart thing he'd said. Ugh! I wish I'd said, 'If you can't manage to get the poor thing's senses back, why didn't you let her die easy without them?'"

Somebody murmured a scandalised remonstrance, and I lost the rest of the conversation.

Nurse Magrath was sitting reading in a glow of afternoon sunshine when I next woke, and this time I spoke to her at once.

"Will you tell me where I am?" I asked, in a faint little far-off voice that never belonged to me.

She looked up alert and pleased. I suppose she had her orders this time, for she put something to my lips before replying.

"You're in St. Jude's Hospital. You

don't remember coming here, of course, but you were brought in after the accident. This is a private ward, and I'm your nurse. You're to have every comfort—the railway company pays for it all—and if you'll only keep quiet and obey orders, you'll be well in no time."

"The accident?"

"You mustn't talk, you know; but there'll be no harm in my telling you, I think, if you'll promise not to excite yourself. You were in rather a bad railway accident miles away in the country; something wrong with the line—the last carriages and the guard's van thrown over the embankment. Two passengers killed and others shaken and hurt."

I began to remember now. The quiet evening sky with the solitary star, the great jagged rent above me, the moaning, dark figure beside me.

"No one knew how much hurt you were, you see. There was no doctor in the train and no house or village near. The others decided to come on, so you were brought to town, and then here. Now you really must keep quiet."

I tried to move a little. She was by my side in an instant, shifting my pillow and aiding me tenderly and skilfully. I could not stir myself. I tried to raise my hand—my left hand—to my face; it dropped waveringly down, and the tears started to my eyes.

"Don't cry, whatever you do!" exclaimed nurse, beginning hurriedly to measure out some drops. I tried to lift it again and failed, but this time something unusual about my fingers caught my eyes.

"Are you looking for your rings? They are quite safe. Such a bother we had to get them off! Two or three had to be cut. Your finger was slightly crushed. There's your wedding-ring all right; we found we could leave that on. The house-surgeon has got them all locked up safe with your locket and your money. Was there anything else? You can keep them here if you like."

I shook my head and made it ache so that I was glad to keep my eyes shut and drop off to sleep again.

The intervals of sense grew longer and longer, and the blank black spaces between shortened in the next few days. Only a curious indolence possessed me. I lay with my eyelids closed, unwilling to give sign of consciousness, or to incur the fatigue of thinking or speaking. I was aware of most that passed, of the matron's

visits, the surgeon's examinations, the different people who came and went round me. I even gathered that mine was an interesting case. I heard a good deal about it, but failed to comprehend at all at the time beyond a general impression that I had sustained some injury to the brain which made my recovery a doubtful question.

I caught fragmentary snatches of Nurse Magrath's discourse—generally in dispraise of my medical attendant, "Old Walsham," as she always called him when he wasn't there. I was "Dr. Millar's case," and Dr. Millar had decided that mine should be a complete recovery; but Dr. Millar had left the hospital and "Old Walsham"—who had committed himself to the opinion that my injuries were fatal and stuck to it—was highly disgusted at the turn I had taken, according to Nurse Magrath.

"He can't prove that she's dead, but he'll die before he admits she's sane," I heard one day, and the words stayed in my mind, though without any particular sense attached to them. Nurse Magrath had no business to allow any such discussion to go on within my hearing, but Nurse Magrath's business was the very last consideration that occurred to her. She was a giddy-brained, inconsequent, light-hearted young chatterbox, neat-handed, and wonderfully good and patient, but otherwise about as unsuited to her work as any young woman could be. I can't believe that she ever took a temperature or administered a dose accurately from the first day to the last of her professional career. It was mercifully ordained that it should be a brief one. She married Dr. Millar and went away to a country practice six months later, and he never trusts her in the surgery for a moment.

"There are ten girls of us at home," she explained to me one day. "And who would have me for a governess? So I took to nursing." Perhaps she did less mischief in the long run after all.

The days grew longer and brighter. The intervals of darkness merged into quiet, health-giving slumber. I began to watch and listen intelligently, and to think a little. I wondered about the Tarrants. Had they heard of my disaster, and would they think themselves bound to take any notice? I felt convinced that they would not. My poor old aunt Hitty. Had any one told her? I thought that was unlikely. I only wrote to her twice a year as a rule, and she would not expect to hear

before the usual time, even if she troubled herself at all about me nowadays. Then about myself. How long should I be let to stay here? What should I be fit for when they made me go?

"What does Dr. Walsham say about me?" I asked aloud almost involuntarily.

Nurse was by my side directly.

"There now! Just when the old noodle is out of the way!" she cried in a tone of exasperation. Then she disappeared to return immediately. "I want him to see you just as you are. He'll come at once, and then you can ask him what you please; but do keep quiet and don't excite yourself if you don't want him to think you're raving. You do feel all right, don't you?"

"I'm not raving," I said, half laughing. "And I'll keep quiet if you'll tell me exactly what is the matter with me."

She gave me a very technical and perfectly incorrect explanation on the spot, with a great many references to Dr. Millar.

"Then I ought to be an idiot or a lunatic if I live at all," I remarked as the result of the information conveyed to me.

"Old Walsham will make you out one or the other if you give him the chance," she said with a laugh, broken off short in the middle by Old Walsham's entrance.

He was a heavy-looking, elderly man, sparing of words, with cold eyes, and a grey, expressionless face. He looked at me silently for a little, and then spoke in the hard rasping voice that had become familiar to me.

"I am glad to see you are better, Mrs. Vernon."

I gazed at him, frowning, but did not answer. "Vernon"; why did he call me Vernon, and where had I heard the name before?

"You must be content to lie here quietly for some time to come. Don't try to talk—don't think, if possible. Leave everything to nurse and to me."

He turned away and gave some directions to nurse in a low tone. A short conversation followed, in which I could see her bearing her part with an air of exaggerated respect and subservience, but bestowing on his back, when he turned it, a disrespectful grimace that, weak as I was, set me off in a hysteric giggle.

He looked at me attentively again.

"Good - bye for the present, Mrs. Vernon."

The name again!

"I wish you wouldn't call me that!" I

exclaimed pettishly. "I don't know why you do it. I'm—I'm——"

I stopped, and began to cry helplessly. I couldn't think of my own name!

He gave nurse a significant glance, which made me angry.

"What do you mean? You know my right name. Why don't you tell it me? Who do you mean to say that I am?"

I even tried to struggle up in bed. Nurse came and put me down at once.

"You shan't be called anything you don't like," she said soothingly.

Then back came the pain, shooting through and through my head, and the old blank blackness swallowed me up again.

Dr. Walsham paid me many and frequent visits. I believe now that he was an able and kindly natured man, but his manner was harsh and unsympathetic, and my dislike and terror of him increased daily. It was partly instinct but more nurse's injudicious chatter that did the mischief, making me look upon him as an enemy with designs against my life or reason, to be constantly watched and defied if possible. This was a morbid terror, due to nerves weakened by the shock—nothing more. Otherwise I did well enough. Nurse Magrath was kind and attentive, and kept me comfortable and cheerful, as she would have done anything that had ears. I noticed one day that she never addressed me by any name whatever, and wondered at it.

"Why don't you call me——" I began once and then came to a stop. She wasn't listening, and I was spared the embarrassment of confessing to the void in my memory.

After that I tried by many artfully devised questions to draw her into mentioning the name under which I had been received. This proved useless. Then I led her to talk of the accident that had brought me there, and asked how she came to know so much about the details.

"It's just the oddest thing that it should have happened where it did—now, wasn't it? Lower Shelton is where Dr. Millar's uncle is Vicar, and one of the girls wrote and told me all about it, and sent me the papers with the accounts."

"Lower Shelton?"

"The nearest village, where they took them to be buried—the poor little boy and the governess, you know."

"Will you let me see the papers?"

She looked doubtfully at me.

"I don't know that I can—not to-day,

at any rate. Wait till we hear what Old Walsham says about you to-morrow. Perhaps he'll say you mustn't read. Besides, I don't know that I haven't lost them."

Dr. Walsham's report of me next day was grudgingly favourable. I might use my eyes a little—reading or working—for a short time, he said. I gave nurse no peace till in the afternoon she hunted up one paper—all she could find. It was a little, brittle, dingy sheet, with a lingering scent of tobacco, dried fish, and candles, with other stock-in-trade of the local newsman.

The accident had been a godsend to the struggling little print. It formed the staple of its columns, which held little else besides advertisements of patent medicines and cuttings from comic papers.

"The Lower Shelton Disaster" in large capitals headed the principal column, then beneath: "The Adjourned Inquest." "Further Details of the Calamity." "The Guard's Evidence." "Identification of one of the Victims." "Major Tarrant in the Witness-box."

Tarrant! Tarrant! Major Tarrant! What was he doing there? I began hastily to skim over the first half-column, which was simply a repetition of "our last edition"—the ghastly details of the catastrophe; the wrecked carriages; narrow escape of the guard; extrication of the passengers; shocking discovery in a first-class compartment of two ladies crushed beneath the débris—one killed, the other comparatively uninjured. Then came the description of the two dead bodies, this lady and a poor little boy of twelve in the adjoining third-class compartment, both lying awaiting identification in a shed near the village.

The boy was ascertained to be a certain Robert Tyler, a little schoolboy bound on a holiday with his uncle and aunt, who both escaped with slight bruises and a severe shaking. The lady was believed to be identical with a Miss Margison, who was known to have been travelling to London in that particular train; and the inquest had been adjourned to permit of the attendance of Major Archibald Tarrant, in whose family she had recently been acting as governess, and Mrs. Gruby, a charwoman, the last person who had seen the deceased lady previous to her departure for London.

I read on and on steadily, with a curious hazy feeling in my head as if I had known

it all along, and had been there and knew what each person would say next.

The evidence of the guard, and engine-driver, and other railway officials was mostly technical and very briefly reported. Mrs. Gruby's was given at length and evidently intended to furnish the light comedy part of the performance.

Mrs. Gruby, "called so as being more respectable at her time of life, but single woman, gentlemen," had heard a rumour of the accident in the town, and "had it borne in on her immediate as that was her pore young lady;" had communicated the same to the station-master, and had accordingly been summoned as a witness; had seen the body—"not as she could a-bear to look at it," but could swear to the dress—or the bits of it—black cashmere, sure enough, and a sweet thing in fits, as I were remarking myself to the pore creature when she give me her old one as will turn handsomely." Could she swear to anything else? "Well, there was a hat, a black straw bound with velvet, like the one she saw on the table." Had the deceased worn any jewellery? "Certainly not. Everything as plain as plain. That was her bag sure enough."

Major Tarrant was the first witness at the adjourned inquest. He began by apologising to the Court for his failure to attend earlier. In consequence of his absence from home the summons had only reached him the day before.

It had become impossible to identify the remains except by the height and colour of the hair; but he had no moral doubt that they were those of the unfortunate Miss Margison. The witness, who seemed greatly moved, spoke in feeling terms of the respect he had for the deceased, who had lived in his family as governess for the last seven years. The letter found in her pocket was undoubtedly written by him, to serve as a testimonial on her seeking a fresh engagement. Also the small travelling-bag found in the carriage had been given to her by him as a parting present.

I went on from page to page in a dull wonderment. They were speaking of me! Me! And I was safe and well here. How did it come about?

Major Tarrant desired to testify his regard for the dead woman by putting up a stone to her memory, but as the railway company had already given orders for one, his memorial would take the form of a small brass in the church. The funeral had another column to itself. I read of the service con-

ducted by the Rector, assisted by a number of the neighbouring clergy, of the exquisite wreaths laid on the coffins by the young ladies at the Rectory, of another wreath of immortelles arriving that morning from Paris as a last tribute of affection from Mrs. Tarrant, Robert, Archibald, Louise, Magdalen, Herbert, and Algernon Tarrant. Of the sumptuous funeral arrangements admirably carried out by Messrs. Deal and Delver, carpenters and undertakers—I had read their advertisement on the first page—of the liberal behaviour of the railway company in munificently defraying all expenses, including that of separate stones for the two graves with the inscriptions, “In the midst of life we are in death,” and “Not lost but gone before,” and “Sacred to the memory of Elizabeth Margison, aged thirty,” and of “Robert Tyler, aged twelve.”

I dropped the paper. I could read no more. What did it all mean? How had I escaped and got here? What would the Tarrants say, and oh, how disgusted he would be at having been betrayed into that small display of emotion. And she! She would never let him hear the end of that brass in the church, and the money those immortelles cost, and the postage! How wrathful she would be! I laughed hysterically at the thought. I could see what had happened more and more clearly. Recollection was coming back. The note I had given to poor Mrs. Vernon, her wedding-ring on my finger, my handkerchief over her face, the bundle of letters she had asked me to keep in my pocket. It was all plain enough to me, and I must explain at once to the others. Here was nurse coming in from her tea.

“Come and look at this!” I called out loudly. “Here is the name I wanted—my own name—Elizabeth Margison. That is who I am. I told you I was not Mrs. Vernon. It is all a horrid mistake.”

Dr. Walsham had entered behind her. He walked straight up to me and laid his cold claws of fingers on my pulse.

“What’s this?” he asked imperatively. “What have you been doing with that newspaper?”

“Read it! Mrs. Vernon is dead—dead and buried. You would not believe me. I am Elizabeth Margison. I couldn’t tell you my name till I saw it here.”

He wasn’t listening. He had turned and was speaking sharply to nurse. I think he ordered a composing draught at once, for I

fell asleep directly and it was far into the next day when I woke again.

I think Nurse Magrath must have been having a bad time of it; for when I woke, feeling very shaken and spent, the result of the narcotic or excitement, and wanted her to comfort and cheer me up, she maintained a sort of reserved, aggrieved demeanour as if I had injured her somehow and she was forgiving me as well as she was able. This did not last very long. I was very meek and obedient and at last she began to smile sunnily again.

“Was I cross, you poor dear? Well, I was vexed rather. I got it hot and strong from Old Walsham, I can tell you, for letting you have that paper. Don’t say anything more about it, that’s a good creature. You were aggravating, you know. What made you go and break out before Old Walsham, of all people? It wouldn’t have mattered if it had been only me. Don’t do it again. He’d like nothing better than to lock you up as a lunatic, just to prove himself right and Dr. Millar wrong.”

“But I tell you I am Elizabeth Margison!”

“Oh, of course, of course! Anything you like to call yourself. It’s all the same to me, only don’t go saying it to Old Walsham. Do remember that! And never mind what he calls you, you’ll soon be rid of him. As soon as you get well and away from here, you can be any mortal thing you like, alive or dead.”

“But Mrs. Vernon is dead and buried.”

“Now don’t go on bothering about it, that’s a dear. Of course she is—quite dead. (I wish to goodness that nasty old paper had been burnt to cinders before I ever let you set eyes on it!) We’re all dead and buried if you choose, only don’t give Old Walsham the satisfaction of hearing you say so.”

I promised to obey her strictly, and was as nearly speechless as possible during the whole of Dr. Walsham’s next visit.

When he left, the matron came in to see me. She did so very frequently. A handsome, kindly woman, but not one to whom I could appeal for sympathy on my own personal concerns. She always looked as if the whole welfare of the hospital rested on her shoulders—as indeed it did. I got my strict dues of care and attention from her, but must ask for nothing beyond. She was likewise the only person of whom Nurse Magrath seemed to stand in genuine awe, and that fact reacted on me.

"You have had a visitor this afternoon, Mrs. Vernon," she said.

"A visitor—for me?" I echoed wonderingly.

"He does not wish me to give you his name just yet—not till you feel strong enough to see him."

"A gentleman? Is he a military man, tall and grey?" I faltered, my mind running on Major Tarrant. She smiled and seemed to assent.

"Oh, don't let him come. Not just yet. I could not bear it! Please say I'm too ill."

I felt myself flushing and trembling all over at the bare idea of the meeting.

"You certainly shall not be troubled with visitors till you are equal to seeing them. We must wait for the doctor's permission in any case."

"Oh, thank you!" I exclaimed fervently, and then the absurdity of my agitation struck me. How could it be Major Tarrant? How could he have discovered his mistake? For him, as for all others, I was lying peacefully at rest under the daisies in Old Shelton churchyard. Besides, he must have asked for "Mrs. Vernon." One of her friends, of course, though she had affirmed so positively that she had not one in London. Then a satisfaction stole into my mind. Here would be my witness when I claimed that identity which I seemed on the point of losing for ever. Here was some one who could at least testify that I was not Mrs. Vernon. I would see him, and as soon as I could. But I must get well and strong, and able to tell my story rationally. Yes, I must be well and strong. That must be now my sole endeavour.

The strength of a definite purpose composed and contented me. I bespoke Dr. Walsham as courteously as I could, and wrung from him the admission that I should soon be well enough to get up for a short time in the day. Nurse Magrath was delighted.

"You are getting on! You'll be ever so much better for the change. There's

your nice quilted dressing-gown quite handy at the top of your trunk, and I dare say you have a cap somewhere to cover your head."

My trunk! I thought of the shabby old tin box that held all my worldly goods, battered by many journeyings; but looking to the far end of the room I saw a huge dress-basket and two tall grey, foreign-looking boxes, all marked "L. V.," and understood the blunder. What had become of my own poor little properties, I wondered. Should I ever see them again? I would write to Aunt Hitty to reclaim them as soon as I could. Next morning nurse danced in holding in both hands a great bunch of roses.

"I've seen him!" she cried excitedly. "He left these for you, and asked no end of questions. He didn't want me to give his name, only 'An old friend,' but I said you guessed him directly. Didn't you?" and she peered into my face like a blue-eyed magpie.

Not Major Tarrant. The flowers alone were a convincing proof to the contrary. They were a beautiful artistic cluster made up for somebody who had fancies of his own, or who thought he was consulting mine. No clumsy mass of stiff blooms impaled on wires, as graceful and natural as a broom-head, but roses, velvety, crimson, and sweet-scented, golden, and faint-tinted spicy tea, and sweet-scented golden, wreathed in their own tender greenery with lavish trails of leaf and bud. I held them and gazed in rapture, then suddenly turned my head aside and burst into tears. I could not keep them. They were not for me. Nurse was dismayed and utterly puzzled.

"Not keep them! Not one?"

"One rose only." He would surely not grudge that to a stranger and forlorn. "Nothing more."

"They'll be glad enough of them in the Granville Ward opposite," she said reluctantly. "It's a shame to turn them out, but," cheering up, "perhaps you know that some more will come to-morrow."

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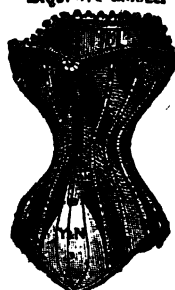
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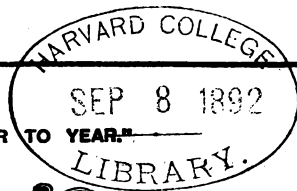
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A Weekly Journal

CONDUCTED BY

CHARLES DICKENS.

No. 188 —THIRD SERIES. SATURDAY, AUGUST 6, 1892. PRICE TWOPENCE.

MISS LATIMER OF BRYANS.

By ELEANOR C. PRICE.

Author of "Alexia," "Red Towers," "The Little One," etc.

CHAPTER IX. GOOD-BYE.

IN all Geoffrey Thorne's wanderings no place had ever seemed to him so much like home as that white, crumbling, tower-like house on the Castle ramparts of Herzheim, with the wide, dignified, now deserted staircase, and the high room beautified by really artistic carvings and mouldings of an older time. He had loved the old room even before Poppy came into it. Now he began to wonder if it would be possible to keep it always, and visit it now and then. The proposal would astonish his old landlady; but she liked him, and had long ago confided to him all her troubles and anxieties. She considered Geoffrey a gentleman. He paid her well and regularly; he talked to her easily in her own language; and she thought his drawings very beautiful. She said he could make a fine fortune, if he chose, by painting little pictures to be sold in the bazaars. He could do them better than the natives, in her opinion. She was a little afraid to advise too strongly for fear of playing traitor to her country people; but there seemed no harm in giving her English friend a few hints. Geoffrey took them very well. He understood the compliment that was meant, smiled gently, and thanked old Dorothee for the idea. She had a high opinion of herself as an art critic, for her large room had been several times let as a studio. He would not for the world have disturbed that opinion.

Mère Dorothee was not quite so well

pleased when English people began to visit her tenant's studio. He looked none the happier for these visits, she thought. She could have told them how he worked by fits and starts; how he paced up and down the room; how peace and enjoyment seemed to have departed from him. She also saw him, from her little barred window downstairs, mooning and moping up and down in the churchyard, or standing for whole quarters of an hour in the little white turret with its scarlet drapery of leaves. This happened in the middle of the day—when Mr. Thorne, as a rule, was steadily at work—immediately after the visit of an English lady and gentleman.

They walked past Dorothee on the way up to the churchyard. She had been out on the lake in her boat with some people from the "Grand Hotel," and she was now crawling up home to her small breakfast, and to see that her tenant wanted nothing, leaving the boat in the charge of two grandsons, under the shade of some yellow trees. People did not care to go out so much in the very middle of the day.

These two English people were Captain Nugent and his sister-in-law. Geoffrey saw them approach with a feeling of horror. But he found it impossible to be very stiff or unfriendly, for there was no excuse, except his momentary fancy of the day before, for disliking Arthur Nugent. With his easy, unconscious, simple boyishness of manner, he generally took people by storm; and however any rival of his might rage inwardly, or when he was not there, he had only to appear to make that rival conscious of a hidden shame.

"Couldn't be a nicer fellow; no harm in him; as open and straightforward as daylight," was the absolutely irresistible

conclusion; and it was strengthened by Arthur's quietness—almost serenity. Then his pleasant smiling eyes seemed to make some sort of apology for the languor of ill-health still hanging about him, and the white, frail look which set up some kind of barrier between him and other men.

And Alice Nugent was by no means without good nature and good manners. As she had come with Arthur to see this poor tiresome man's pictures, she was quite prepared to do her duty.

"One always has to tell lies in a studio," she observed, as they walked up.

As a fact, however, she did not find it necessary to be very untruthful. She really saw promise in some of the sketches, not being so critical as her husband; and of these she expressed an amount of admiration which ought to have satisfied any artist. Also, Geoffrey Thorne himself, in his painting blouse, with his grave face, and a touch of sadness and humility in his work which did not affect his very evident strength and manliness of nature, seemed to her interesting and picturesque. He was much more in place here than among them all last night in the salon. While examining the drawings she spared a keen glance now and then for the artist as he talked to Arthur, and she felt a little sorry for him. Having, among her excellently worldly qualities, a great dislike to unnecessary spending of money, she was pleased by his answer to the question—which yet seemed to give him no offence—whether he had any wish to sell his pictures.

"No; not now; not here," he answered. "I don't know what I may do later, in London. My plans are quite uncertain."

"That is nice," thought Alice. "We shall not be bound to buy things we don't want, or thought stingy if we don't buy them."

She did not suspect the strange, mistaken fancies, the ambitions for that coming autumn, which were making the poor fellow madly careful of his dignity. In fact, as she stood there and listened to his talk with her brother-in-law, it struck her that Mrs. Nugent's plan meant quite unnecessary cruelty. His admiration for Poppy Latimer was only too evident, of course. That was not to be denied; but after all, what was it? Just an artist's romantic devotion to beauty. If Otto and Arthur admired the girl so much, was it any wonder if a painter admired her still more?

"Nonsense! Exaggerated stuff!" was

Mrs. Otto Nugent's conviction. "Mamma deserves to fail in her plans, she drives at them so hard. However, as we are going, this poor man ought to know. I must tell him in a minute or two, if Arthur does not."

Arthur did not. He loitered agreeably round, and they might have gone away without hinting that this was their first and last visit, if Alice had not suddenly pounced on a sketch which made things easy.

"The Jungfrau at sunset, from Saint Carolus. That's lovely, Mr. Thorne—like a burning mountain. I wonder if we shall see a sunset like that. Do you know that we are all going off to-morrow to Saint Carolus?"

"For the night? Are you really?" said Geoffrey, with quite a new brightness in his tone. "You will find it a very pretty place. Quiet, you know; quite country. But if you like romantic walks——"

"I don't," she replied. "I would rather stay here, though this is not my ideal. But we have all found out in a great hurry that Herzheim doesn't agree with us. Captain Nugent's mother is not happy about him, nor about herself; and my husband does not care for a town, though he says very little. So I am carried away by the wishes of the majority."

"Not coming back, then? I thought you only meant an excursion."

"Never in my life," said Alice afterwards to Otto, "did I feel so like a cat playing with a mouse; the poor man's voice and face were absolutely joyful. It was too hard to have to tell him that we were not going alone."

She was astonished at her own kind feelings.

"You will be lonely," she said, and her bright eyes looked him straight in the face.

He looked at her, entirely puzzled for the moment; and now she flushed a little with excitement and interest, for never was a man's story more plainly to be read than in that transition from joy through alarm to misery which his expressive features showed almost immediately.

"You cannot mean that," he seemed to say. "Yet you must mean something, when you talk to me of loneliness; and there is no other. Yes; I see it all."

He said nothing. Arthur, a few yards off, was stooping over the Saint Carolus sketch. Alice lowered her eyes, for she hardly dared still to look at him.

"Miss Latimer and her niece are going

with us," she said in a low, matter-of-fact voice, quite without its former liveliness. "I believe Miss Latimer, too, is rather glad to get away; she has not felt very well here. They all think the air of Saint Carolus will be so much better. And you know Mrs. Nugent's object in coming here was to be with Miss Latimer."

"Yes, so I heard," Geoffrey answered. "And—I beg your pardon—to-morrow, did you say?"

"Yes, to-morrow."

His paleness struck her painfully, and she looked back once or twice, as she walked away with Arthur, at the old white walls where they had left him among his pictures. It seemed as if Arthur had noticed nothing, and this was not wonderful, for his intuitions were seldom quick. But as they went down the stony lane he turned to her and said:

"Alice, don't be angry, but didn't you explain a good deal to that fellow? I mean, you know, a good deal more than was necessary. We needn't consult him, surely, as to whether we go or stay. I didn't quite see why you should explain about Miss Latimer."

"Oh, I thought he was rather a friend of theirs," said Alice lightly. "And he will be lonely, poor man. He seems to have nobody else here."

"Well, I don't know. It's a funny sort of friendship—more a kind of patronage—and one feels as if Miss Latimer could so very well explain for herself, if she wished it."

"Of course, I know, but artists are sensitive, and I thought——"

"It doesn't matter, of course. Only I always find one has to be just a little careful, don't you know, with people like that."

"I don't think I have done much harm," she answered a little scornfully.

"None—none whatever. I was only thinking what Miss Latimer would have liked. We, of course, have nothing on earth to do with the man."

Alice did not defend herself further, though she felt a little angry. It was not the first time that Arthur had appeared to her somewhat in the light of a fool.

Geoffrey Thorne's painting did not advance much that afternoon. At first he was plunged in the lowest depth of depression by the news that Mrs. Otto Nugent had not unkindly told him. It seemed to him strange and unkind that his friends should not have taken the

trouble to tell him themselves of this intended move; and yet he was much more angry with himself for expecting such consideration. He very nearly destroyed the sketch he had made with so much pains for Porphyria. What was the use of laying his work at her feet? She cared no more for that than she did for him. He thought he had better not see her again, and resolved to keep away from the hotel altogether that day. If she gave him so much thought as to wish to say good-bye, she could easily send him a message.

He walked up and down his room for a long time, much to the disapproval of Mère Dorothea downstairs. Presently, leaving the sketch undestroyed—for after all it was good, and pleased him better than anything he had yet done, and its destruction seemed, except in the first flush of injured feelings, an unnecessary height of heroism—he ran downstairs and set himself to pacing round and round the stern, monotonous square of the churchyard. It had often been a scene of inspiration for him, and all those quaint epitaphs, reminding him of lives like his own, now quietly ended and cold, seemed just the touch of poetry wanted to soften hard broad lines, either in plans of work or dreams of living.

The worn pavement of the still place echoed under his impatient footsteps. Like quivering with rainbow light, mountains grey and dazzling silver, foreground of clear-cut shadows and varied colour of trees and towers and leaf embroidery, all becoming more intense and brilliant as the sun of the September day crept round to the west; they had often helped him before, and even now they did not quite fail him. At least, he went quietly after a time into the haunted turret at the corner, and sat down on the stone ledgethere and waited, thinking strongly and telling himself once more the sternest truths, yet half expecting every moment that she would appear, coming out of the shadow round the corner of the house wall, and vowing inwardly that if she did not, she would never be troubled with the sight of him again.

He knew his own weakness so little as to be absolutely surprised that evening to find himself following other people into the "Blumenhof" dining-room, and taking his usual place near the door. Neither the Nugent party nor the two Miss Latimers had yet come in; but in a few minutes he

felt, rather than saw, the people who were passing rather quickly behind his chair. Miss Fanny Latimer paused a moment to say in a low and friendly tone: "We shall see you after dinner, Mr. Thorne."

He looked round and rose to his feet, meeting not her eyes, but Poppy's, for she was close behind her aunt. She gave him the slightest bend of her head, with a little sweet smile. Geoffrey trembled from head to foot as she passed on. He did not look after her; she was followed by Otto and Arthur Nugent. Otto's quick eyes, at least, had seen his face, and Otto had smiled to himself, thinking that the move to Saint Carolus was a good one. No one but his mother, perhaps, would have seen the necessity so clearly, and acted on it with such instantaneous energy. His mother was a very clever woman.

After dinner they all lingered a little on the terrace; but the moonlight was not quite so beautiful, there was a slight chill in the air, and again this evening mists were rising from the lake, and hovering in the lower part of Herzheim. Very soon Mrs. Nugent, followed by Miss Latimer, escaped into the salon, murmuring some little warning to Arthur as she went. He took no notice of this, however, but presently asked Poppy whether she was cold, and whether he might fetch her some kind of wrap. She thanked him very gently, and said no. Then, having been rather silent for a few minutes, she turned to Geoffrey, with whom Otto and his wife had been trying to make conversation, and said, rather oddly, they all thought: "Are you going home soon—to Bryans, I mean? I want to give you some messages."

"May I have them now? I shall not see you again, I suppose."

"Are you coming into the salon?"

"No."

The word was spoken with the courage of despair, for this seemed to be his last chance. He had things to say—at least he fancied so—and he could not, would not, spend another evening like the last, though at the time, not knowing what was so soon to follow, it had been more than bearable.

Poppy thought his manner strange. She was conscious that some odd feeling—perhaps it was responsibility—connected with him kept her from being quite happy, quite single-hearted, with her new friends, quite glad to be going away from Herzheim. Was it the painter's dark reproachful eyes that haunted her; or

was it Saint Margaret in the porch, with suggestions of some unknown height of self-forgetfulness; or was it only the fascination of the old mediæval town, its rushing waters and grand distant guard of mountains? If it were Geoffrey Thorne, why should his eyes be reproachful? She had not neglected him.

Though she hardly knew what she wanted to say to him, or what her interest in him was, one thing seemed clear; they must talk together for a few minutes alone before she left Herzheim. Here she understood that "No" rightly.

Then, somehow, the other people had disappeared, as if they instinctively knew what must happen to her; and she was left alone with Geoffrey in the dim half-light, the shadow of the plane-trees, her tall, slight, straight figure dressed in some pale colour, her fair head bent in rather puzzled thought, looking really like the slender wild flower to which Alice Nugent had compared her.

"You are going away, Miss Latimer," Geoffrey repeated.

He seemed to her a little tiresome, for they had just been talking about the move, all together, and he had been inclined to praise Saint Carolus. It did not seem necessary to go back, to express regrets, almost to make apologies for what was so very natural. Poppy was never fond of unnecessary tragedies, and morbid fancies were not likely to be encouraged by her, though no one was more ready to acknowledge the claims of friendship to the full.

"Yes," she said, with a curious gravity, her eyes wandering away into the shadowy orchard. "It is a little sooner than we expected, but I did not think we should stay here long."

A mere shade in expression would have made both words and manner cold. Probably she felt this herself, and her kind heart rebelled, for in a moment her voice softened, and the old friendliness came back to her eyes.

"My aunt and I meant to have come to your studio this afternoon," she said, "but we were prevented. I wanted to tell you of our new plans; and then, do you know, if I may say it, I should so much like to possess one or two of your drawings. You won't mind parting with them? That is your wish, isn't it? I hardly know which, without seeing them again; but Mrs. Otto Nugent has been telling me of such a pretty sketch of the Jungfrau from Saint

Carolus, where we are going. I thought perhaps I might have that—only, may I see Saint Carolus itself before deciding?"

He listened patiently. Nothing that sweet voice said could hurt much; but if he would not sell his drawings to other people, most certainly he would not to her. He hesitated a moment; her questions must be answered as gently as they were asked. That miserable thing, civilisation, laid its cold touch on his longing desire to kiss her hand or her dress; to tell her that as the artist was hers, his work was hers, so that there could not, in the nature of things, be any question of buying and selling.

"I told Captain Nugent this afternoon," he said, "that I did not mean to sell any of my pictures now. Later, perhaps—I don't know. But of course—if you care for any of them they are yours. You could not, I think, give me greater happiness. You will let me know some day if you will have the Jungfrau sketch. And I must confess that I have been working at one, specially for you—Herzheim from the other side of the lake. I think it is not so bad as some. Will you let me—I will send it to you at Bryans."

"I should like it very much indeed, if you have done it on purpose for me. Thank you so much. It will be a recollection of these pleasant days. But only that one, please. That one on condition that you don't give away any more. You will never get on at all if you are so generous with your work. And tell me, are you likely to be here much longer?"

"I think not—I don't know. I may pay them a visit at home this autumn. Will you be going back—before very long?"

"Some time in October, I suppose."

"Did you say you had any messages?"

"No—no. But we should like you to make friends with our dear Rector. I don't think you know him; and I rather wish you would renew your acquaintance with the Farrants, my friends in the village. Mr. Farrant would like to see you. You would interest him, I'm sure. And Maggie—well, you might paint her portrait. Yes; paint it for me."

They were strolling in the shadow of the plane-trees down towards the orchard where Geoffrey had had his best and longest talk with her two evenings before. He could not see the flush on her cheek, the laugh in her eye, the look as if she had said something a shade too daring. But

he did wonder at a certain touch of pleasure and eagerness in the tone of her voice.

"You set me something to do for you," he said, "like a princess in a fairy tale. The task isn't an easy one. I never paint portraits, you know."

"But why not try? Why not begin? It must be the most interesting kind of painting. And Maggie Farrant will astonish you. She will inspire you. She would inspire any artist."

"Still, you have set me a hard task, you know. And, don't you remember, people in fairy tales had something to look forward to."

The words nearly choked him. They were the boldest he had yet said to her; and yet he tried to make his tone a little playful, as hers now was, and succeeded so well that any depth of passionate feeling was as unperceived as it would have been unwelcome.

"We will think about that when I come home," she said. "In the meanwhile, you must be disinterested."

They walked a few yards further; then she turned back with a slight shiver, and said the evenings were like autumn now.

They talked a little, strolling back along the terrace, of the next day's journey to Saint Carolus. Geoffrey could bear to hear and to talk of it now, for it seemed to him as if the sweetness of the first evening had come back; as if he had been a fool to be jealous and unhappy, to think her for a moment cold or unkind. Not that he was actually hopeful. He could not misunderstand her so far; and the parting, the empty weeks to come, lay upon him with a weight of sadness. But with this sadness there was something sweet, perhaps only a lover's own deep rejoicing in the perfection of what he loves.

The terrace was deserted, and the moonlight was pale and ghostly; very different from the glorious golden flood, which almost seemed to have warmth like sunshine, of two evenings ago. Streams of light from the hotel windows fell across the gravel, on the grey stems of the plane-trees, and the chairs and tables, and the stone balustrades of the garden. Near the salon window Geoffrey lingered a little.

"May I say good-bye here?"

"Is it really good-bye?" she asked, as her fingers touched his. "We shall see you to-morrow, shan't we? The boat does not go till half-past twelve. Can't you come down and see us off?"

"No." He hesitated; but in a moment became more positive. "I want a long day's sketching to-morrow—an expedition. No; I shall not see you again."

"You will come in now and say good-bye to my aunt—and the others?"

"No—excuse me. Please ask Miss Latimer to forgive me. Don't think me a savage, but I don't want to come in."

She stood still a moment, and one cannot tell what thoughts crossed her mind. In any case, she was not angry—perhaps no woman can be angry at being worshipped, however impossible and unsuitable the worshipper may be.

"Good-bye, then," she said very low. "'Auf wiedersehen.' Give my love to them at Bryana."

He bowed his head and sprang down the steps into the garden. Just then Arthur Nugent, after looking out for the twentieth time, stepped impatiently from the salon window to welcome her. As she walked into the room he wondered, almost jealously, at the smile on her lips. It seemed to him so exquisite that he shared, for the first time, in his brother's wish to kick that painter fellow.

IN THE MOUNTAINS OF MAJORCA.

MAJORCA of the Balearics is not at all a bad place for the Englishman at large in the Mediterranean. It has, too, the advantage of being by no means overrun with other Britons. Still, it is confessedly slow—and especially during Lent. Now and then a citizen dies and has to be buried—for which the cold-blooded tourist is grateful, inasmuch as it provides him with a mild spectacle as he sits smoking a cigar in the Rambla under the shade of the plane-trees. Ordinarily, there is not much to do except eat, drink, and lounge about in the windmill-studded precincts of the town. Of sights there are few, save the cathedral, the old exchange, the Castle of Bellver, beautifully situated a couple of miles away, and the industrious Majorcans themselves, at work in their little shops in the narrow streets of the town.

Thus we soon wearied of the capital, and the more because it was so mortally relaxing, even in April. With our British instincts upon us, we determined therefore to get off into the mountains. Majorca, it must be understood, is just about equally divided into flat land and hilly land. The interior of the island is nearly as level

as a dish, and, of course, dreadfully hot, except on days of extraordinary cold. But all the west of the island is mountainous. The highest points are about four thousand feet above the sea, which is a very fair altitude for so small an island.

So, one roasting day in mid-April, we set off afoot for Valldemosa, each with a mere cartridge-case upon our shoulders, containing night-gear, tooth-brush, and comb, and nothing more. Our Palma landlord used all possible argument to induce us to hire a carriage, at least for the beginning of the tour. But we were obstinate. We meant to take the rough with the smooth, or, rather, the intensely hot with the enjoyably temperate, and get a fair average amount of pleasure out of the entire trip.

It was hot in the plain, and no mistake, when we had left the huge fortifications of the capital behind us, and had the purple mountains in front for our goal. By the way, Palma's walls are worth the artist's notice. They are really a very fine piece of mediæval work, and though crumbling, may yet last another couple of centuries. We were in the whitest of white high-roads, with fertile gardens on both sides of us, with fig-trees, almond-trees, and the other usual vegetation of these latitudes. From the orange-trees the perfume of sweet blossoms came to us very agreeably. Now and again we passed a portly "finca," or country villa, painted blue or crimson, and with a palm-tree or two in its vicinity, as well as fields of maize and olive-woods near. The dust began to lift, denoting a breeze from the hills. Vehicular traffic was rare, for a mercy. But at intervals a lumbering car, with a wine-barrel on it, creaked towards us, and its oxen or mules half smothered us for a moment. Our Palma landlord was distinctly right in trying to dissuade us from pedestrianism in the Majorca plain. We lost pounds of flesh, I should think, during the couple of hours ere we got into the first glen of the mountains, with something between us and the sun.

Here, however, it was exquisite. That is really the chief feature of Majorca: the abrupt change from mountains to plains. The former spring bolt upright from the latter, with little or none of the preliminary ascents common in other lands. Cultivation of a close kind suddenly ceased. The grey rocks rose almost perpendicularly for a thousand feet or so upon either

hand, with contorted fig-trees and olives sticking out of the clefts wherever they could get root-hold. A mean little brook trickled from the pass towards the plain, with trees by its banks and many of the flowers of spring.

Gradually the glen turned towards the north-west, giving us glimpses of towering and wooded mountain-tops beyond, and then it slowly widened. At length the superb valley of Valldemossa was before us, with its crags massed with foliage, and in the distance a church spire. This is a most beautiful little spot. You are in a hole like the bottom of a teacup, and all round are fantastic peaks, with woods of ilex, fir, and olive over the mountain spurs. Here and there in the bed of the valley are vineyards and fruit gardens, and the latter were in most bountiful blossom, the perfume of which was enchanting. As luck would have it, a nightingale was singing as we entered the heart of this wonderful little recess. We would at that moment have been content, like the monks of old, to live out our days in this scene of beauty.

But it was dreadfully relaxing. Not a breath of air stirred. Fortunately the sun had gone behind one of the mountain-peaks, and left us merely the blue canopy overhead. Yet even as it was we had some ado to drag our legs in the direction of the church spire. The village of Valldemossa is a poor place. It has no inn. But there is something to see in the remains of the old Carthusian monastery which was suppressed in 1835, and which is now cut up so as to form a number of country apartments for rich Palma people. Nothing can be imagined more voluptuously attractive than the life led in the season by these happy tenants. The rooms are bowered with flowers, and look out upon gardens with the wooded mountains beyond. Of harmful winds there can be none here. We were immensely taken with one or two of the suites through which we were conducted. Moreover, as they were furnished for immediate habitation, it seemed quite cruel that the housekeeper should shake her head in response to our wish that we might be bedded here for the night. The church adjacent to these transformed "cells" is not interesting. It has some bright green and white tile-work, and from the tower one has an admirable view of the old convent plan beneath, and of the valley all round. But we gaped

abominably in the tepid air during the ascent of the tower; and, afterwards, having paid our woman-guide a trifle, we set out for Miramar, which is only half an hour beyond.

We left the Valley Beautiful—as its Spanish name means—by a western outlet, which soon brought us to the coast. The cliffs below us, towards the Mediterranean, and above us, on the right, were very low. But it seemed a little painful to notice so many posts of warning with the word "vedado" (forbidden) upon them. The truth is that we had got into the domain of the Archduke Luis Salvator of Austria, who spends months annually in this sequestered nook of Europe. As we had previously met the Archduke's secretary in Palma, and received a cordial invitation to present ourselves at the Villa, we hoped to make His Highness's acquaintance, and also see something of the art treasures which he has amassed in Majorca.

It now fell dark rapidly. The sun had gone below the sea-line ere we reached the Archduke's guest-house, and a rather curious mist crept up the woods from the water. We were far above the Mediterranean, and yet so near it, that we could not see the base of the rocks along which our road was cut. This gives some idea of the picturesqueness of the western coast of Majorca.

The guest-house reached at last, we were assured by the old woman in charge—she had a fine nut-cracker face—that we should be well bedded in it. The building is not pretentious; but it is large and has a superb situation on the edge of the cliff. Thus assured, we strolled off in the gloaming down the woods towards the Archduke's house. In its way, nothing could well have been more romantic than our experiences of the next hour or so. We completely lost our bearings. We came upon artificial waterfalls and bathing pools with marble balustrades, little temple-like buildings perched on the extremity of precipices, some with statues and some with other fantastic decorations; flights of steps, seemingly interminable, and the most lovely little gardens imbedded in the steep woods of olive and ilex. But we could find nothing like an inhabited house. Meanwhile, the moon came out and shone upon us through the trees. However, though it gave a deal of sentimental beauty to our surroundings, it did not help us a bit as a guide. At length we tired of the search and wandered back as best we could.

The closeness of the woods relaxed us almost as much as the Valldemosa Glen had done. We were thus exceedingly relieved when, quite late, we again reached the guest-house and sat to our supper.

One feature of the Archduke's guest-house is the fact that the platters and crocks are all Majorcan ware. They did not commend themselves to us for their beauty. The tumblers were, indeed, very common sand-cast things; but their very coarseness was a quaint sort of attraction. The room, too, being a long one, with merely a rough, uncovered table in the middle, and hard seats to it, and with a sort of night-light for illumination, was amusing. There were some other pilgrims at the one extremity of the room, feasting on wine and lettuces; but we could see very little of them, though we saw their simple meal being carried to them. After supper we smoked a cigar apiece, strolled once more into the misty moonlight, and listened to the buzzing of the night insects, and then retired to our room. The guest-house sheets were like the guest-house crockery—rough but clean. We slept very well on them, and arose at eight o'clock refreshed.

It was a brilliant morning, cloudless and with every promise of great heat. We, therefore, excused ourselves from collars, at least during our projected twelve-mile walk to Soller. The dame provided chocolate and buns—the conventional Majorcan breakfast—and then gave us "God speed," being evidently much pleased with our gratuity of a couple of pesetas (one shilling and eightpence). It must be understood that the guest-house is not an inn, but a courteous concession by the Archduke to the needs of the travelling public, which is not very large in Palma. We might have requited our night's lodging with thanks and nothing more, though that would have been a trifle mean.

The splendour of the day quite determined us to forego a morning call at the archducal villa, which we saw from the high-road soon after starting. After all, had we not seen curios of all kinds in the Palma houses; and further, why should we intrude upon the most precious hours of a student like His Highness simply to satisfy our curiosity? We took it all for granted, therefore, and strode on in the sunlight, with the Mediterranean hundreds of feet below on the one hand, and the mountains gradually heightening upon the other hand. This part of the island shows

how laborious the Majorcan agriculturist can be. The mountains were terraced for hundreds of feet up, and vines were set on the artificial gardens thus heavily buttressed against the hillsides. Now and then, after protracted rains, there is dire calamity on these slopes. The water makes a clean breach from the mountain-tops through the gardens, tumbling their supports to pieces, and doing all it can to break the hearts of the poor Majorcana. They do but set to work again afterwards, however, with unwearied perseverance.

We walked for an hour, and hunger made itself felt. But of wayside inns or aught of the kind there are none in Majorca. It grew tiresome. We called at a certain villa perched on a precipitous knoll seaward, with some elaborate marble decorations; but the laughing damsels who came to us told us they were not innkeepers. True, they refreshed us gratis with milk and plied us with questions, but aught more solid they seemed to think unnecessary. By the way, we were much struck here with the number of dogs about the premises. There were eleven or twelve, including a couple of gigantic boarhounds, which stood six feet high on their hind legs. A felonious-minded tramp would meet with a desperately warm reception in such a house.

On we went, enthusiastic enough about the beauty of our surroundings, but even more and more hungry. We came to Deya, a superb amphitheatrical recess from the coast, with water falling down its sides from the mountains, and a wonderful luxuriance of gardens and vegetation. The houses here were quite in the back of the recess, with orange and lemon-trees all about them, and looking beautifully clean after the Majorcan fashion. Old ladies and pretty brown-faced damsels were sitting in the cool inner rooms spinning and gossiping. Outside was the hot sunlight and the white blossoms of innumerable fruit-trees. By the trickling water-sides maiden-hair fern grew like a weed, and the little orchards were thick with asphodels and other flowers. But alas, for all this beauty, Deya could not confess to an inn. "You had much better," said a villager, "go on to Soller. Ob, yes, you will be there very soon—caramba! on such a fine day, too!"

So on we had to go and reached Soller at about one o'clock. Our descent into it from the cliff road was striking. The road is a magnificent zigzag, but much

too tedious for pedestrians. We therefore went in a bee-line as well as we could, jumping down from terrace to terrace, and feeling the temperature warmer every few minutes. It may be well to say that the direct route between Soller and Palma is another climb up the mountains, with engineering work that is reckoned one of the most noticeable things in the island.

Never have I seen such luxuriance of vegetation as this valley of Soller showed us. The gardens teemed with blossoms. The valley is like Valldemosa in its outline, pent in with mountains completely save for a neck-like pass towards the Mediterranean, and three or four similar steep ascents through the mountains. As for the town, it is quite large, though straggling, with a population of nearly ten thousand people.

We made our way up its cobbled streets, and were soon welcomed in the "Hôtel de la Paz," the cool vestibule of which was a treat after our few hours' scorching in the sun. In an inner room tables were laid, and nothing remained for us to do except order dinner and await it with Christian fortitude. There were some Spanish ladies in the vestibule with nosegays of huge yellow roses, evidently willing to converse with us. Even they confessed that Soller was unconscionably hot.

While dinner was preparing, we strolled about the town and looked into the houses. For orderliness and cleanliness these domestic interiors cannot be beaten. They were worthy of the neatest of Dutch villages. The god whitewash is eminently sacrificed to here; and a very fine contrast to their walls are the deep-complexioned women-folk in their black silk head-gear and their blue cotton gowns. They one and all seemed complimented by our notice of their houses; asked us in and pointed out their domestic implements, laughed, and chatted, and said "Caramba!" without end.

Behind our hotel is the river of Soller, which has a very brief course, seeing that the mountains whence it descends are immediately round the town. There was little enough water in it this April day, but they told us that trout are more than a mere tradition of it. Also we were told of a melancholy day some years ago when, after a heavy storm, the river rose about twenty feet in as many hours and carried a good deal of Soller into the Mediterranean. No doubt the following spring the valley gardens did their best to atone for this calamity by increased luxuriance.

We dined admirably here, with just the trifles of civilisation which are so grateful to the unexpectant traveller. Our attendants were dark-eyed, sweet-tongued damsels whose gaze never seemed off us, so anxious were they to anticipate our needs. Of the Soller wine I cannot say very much. We tried two or three kinds, and found a white wine the most drinkable. Dinner over, it was much more congenial to sit and smoke in the cool vestibule looking out into the street than to prowl forth upon the hot cobbles. But towards evening we took heart and went out. The atmosphere had cooled amazingly, for the sun had gone behind the western mountain barrier. The streets were alive with merry little blue-gowned boys and girls, to whom we proved a great attraction. They ran after us with the words "Caramba!" and "caballero" upon their eager young tongues, and did not heed the foray made upon them—apparently for our relief—by a kindly old dame with a broom. However, our pace soon threw them off. We walked in the cooling but still warm air all up the river-bed to the sea, arriving at length at the port of Soller, a circular pool, cliff-bound save where a shingle beach stretched towards the town. It is quite a strange little harbour, with fair anchorage for yachts of good size. Here, too, we saw the remains of the old fort of Soller, a massive round building commanding the head of the bay, and superbly situated. Later, we learnt that a foreign tourist was so captivated by this dilapidated and wholly abandoned building that he offered ten thousand pounds for it and a certain amount of land adjacent. This offer was munificent enough; but no, the Majorcans would not think of it. They love their land in an extraordinary degree, and the man must be next door to starvation ere he will part with it.

On this shingly beach we lay in idleness for a while, pelting the water while the warm southern night stole on; then when the stars were out and the moon hung over one of the mountain pinnacles, we retraced our steps up the defile. A mosquito or two warned us that we might have a restless night—a warning which, thank goodness, was belied. The lemon-gardens by the wayside tempted us to lay hands on some of the fruit, which seemed infinite in supply. A sweet lemon or two proved a light but acceptable prelude to the beds that awaited us in our hotel.

I have nothing but praise to say of this

Soller hotel. We slept well, and the cleanliness and cheapness were both good qualities. Once only did I wake in the night, and that was to hear the mellow voice of the Soller watchman in the streets proclaiming that it was a fine night. It was positively soothing to listen to this announcement made in so agreeable a fashion.

Neither fleas nor mosquitoes vexed us in the dark hours, and so we turned out at six the next morning in capital condition for the long day that was before us. We proposed to make for a mountain monastery distant fully fifteen miles of very rough climbing. With this intention we were not to be satisfied with a Spanish breakfast, but had eggs and ham and much else to help us onwards. Also, we filled a bag with provisions, including a big bottle of wine, and slung it over the shoulders of the square-built lad who was to be our guide.

We were off before seven o'clock, which was none too soon, although the sun had not yet found its way into Soller's sequestered corner. For a couple of miles we had easy walking, but every step brought us nearer to what seemed merely a grey mountain wall some two to three thousand feet high, broken into startling pinnacles tufted with scrub and draped with ivy and brambles. High over this to the north was the bold square head of Puig Mayor, the monarch of Majorca. It was just this wall of mountain that eventually we had to scale. We paused for a moment at the base of it and gazed upwards. A man could hardly see anything more abrupt.

Of course the track zigzagged upwards with extreme precipitousness. The ravine to the right grew momentarily more formidable. Yet even here, scratched out of the precipices, were tiny little patches of vines and vegetables, which the indefatigable Majorcans were cultivating at a venture. They had to do their hodding almost with one leg in the air, but they did it nevertheless, and found time and nerve to sing while they worked.

A slip of a river dropped over the mountain wall and reached the valley by a series of cascades. This moisture of course much aided vegetation. Of flowers there was no lack; they starred the rock, cyclamens being especially abundant, and ferns in great variety. But the chief attraction to us as we rested frequently and gasped for breath, were the stupendous pinnacles of

the mountain which we climbed past and left beneath us. The storms of ages have played picturesque havoc with these limestone masses; and it was one of the finest sights imaginable to look down as we did with these rocks in the foreground, and the rich green and golden sunlit plain of Soller still farther below. One jump and it seemed as if we could have landed at our starting-point.

This went on for an hour, and then we were on a sort of pocket plateau, with a green dimpling mountain nook to the right and a single farmhouse. One or two of the final precipices which we had to get by were quite trying; a false step, and down we should have gone hundreds of feet without a chance of salvation. But we came through it all in safety, and found ourselves in a long mountain recess with Puig Mayor close in front, and a very alluring pyramidal peak on the east. At one time we proposed to scale Puig Mayor, but its flanks are distinctly hard, and the foothold looked dangerous. We preferred, therefore, to vary our excursion by climbing the pyramidal mountain instead. It cost us a good half-hour, and was awkward near the summit. But we were repaid for our exertions by a magnificent prospect all over the interior of Majorca, and also a sight of Palma itself, white and radiant, against the sea. From Alcadia in the north to the capital in the south the island was displayed to us.

However, we could not afford to be extravagant with our time; and so we soon descended, and began a hot and wearisome tramp up the whitened recess, wholly exposed to the sun. This was distinctly a painful hour and a half. Even the graces of Puig Mayor, who formed our left-hand barrier all the time and showed some brilliant colouring, could not atone to us for our discomfort.

But, as I have said, the chief characteristic of Majorca is its astounding and abrupt contrasts of scenery. At the end of the five-mile tramp we came to a farmhouse, with an ilex wood on one side of it, and a sweet brook flowing through the wood. Here we halted, and in the midst of a wild garden of lilies, asphodels, and common orchids, lay down and enjoyed the shade for half an hour. Then on we went again, and by an impressive turn we left the hot mountain glen and found ourselves suddenly deep in woods with a roaring green torrent at our side. It was a very Pass of Thermopylae which we had to negotiate, with

this river as the only apparent gateway. Afterwards we were in thick shade, the ilex and firs and beeches seeming in a state of primeval density. This was the grandest hour or two Majorca afforded us. We ascended and descended, ever with huge peaks towering above us and visible through the interstices of the tree-tops. The greenery of the forest was delightful. The trees were in fresh leafage, and ferns were here, there, and everywhere. Still, even this grandeur had its drawback. The exceeding steepness of the way and the noontide heat told on us. It was a satisfaction to mark that they told equally on our guide also.

This went on for two hours, and then we dined at the mouth of a cave from out which a spring bubbled, with the usual wealth of verdure all about it. Our dinner was rather messy, thanks to the jerking of its bearer; but an excellent appetite and the sweet situation of the dining-room made us overlook this defect.

We passed one tiny group of dark red houses in the forest, and towards four o'clock came to Lluch, where we were to sleep. Lluch is reckoned the most romantic spot in Majorca, which is saying a good deal. It is not so much a village as a monastery turned into a school, but with certain venerable traditions—a Virgin of Lluch that works miracles, for example—which constantly attract pilgrims. The monastery was our inn, and here we were given a great, red-tiled room, with two odd recesses containing beds, and with prints on the walls telling of the wonders wrought by Our Lady of Lluch. We were fed in the kitchen with sundry others, and of our free will gave a dollar in the morning for our accommodation, which was about five times as much as was expected.

Before supping, however, we wandered off up this romantic nook, and came to a great yawning break in the country, with a waterfall of a hundred and fifty feet, and lower cascades, all leading to a second spacious enclosed valley, for all the world like a Dutch "polder" in its general shape, though far prettier than any landscape in Holland. The brambles and wild fig-trees were, however, matted so thickly about the waterway that we gave up the tempting design of following the stream into this valley within (and below) a valley. Besides, the air here was most relaxing. It was a supreme effort to walk a mile or two, and we both felt utterly unstrung by supper-

time. We were not well pleased, moreover, by the appearance of the clouds, which gathered in black battalions about our mountain nest by nightfall.

A monastery servitor called us at six again the following day. We scurried from our nocturnal nooks to the window to look out at the weather. There was no doubt about it, rain had fallen in the night. The fruit-trees in the great neglected garden held much moisture on their leaves, and the soil looked spongy. The air, too, had a cool freshness which was quite a new experience for us in Majorca. I don't know exactly the altitude of Lluch, but should guess it to be more than two thousand feet above the sea level. This in April means much. In summer, we were told, people come hither from the plains, and thoroughly enjoy the bracing change.

We took our breakfast of buns and chocolate in the grand old refectory of the house. There were antique portraits on the walls, and some paintings of fruit and game which did not seem worth hanging. Here, too, the principal of the establishment came and shook hands with us, and exhibited, as if it were a most interesting curiosity, the *carte de visite* of an English captain who had found his way to Lluch from the marshes by Albufera, where he had been shooting snipe. I have little doubt Englishmen will in future be welcomed genially at Lluch if they declare their nationality. But they must be able to grope about in the Spanish language, as English is quite unknown here. The same may be said of Majorca as a whole, though in Palma the nobility and gentry understand it.

At one time we projected walking on to Pollensa in the north, and thence descending to Puebla, where the little Majorca railway has its terminus. But the weather portents grew decidedly bad. The principal shook his head at the clouds; so, too, did the handsome lad whom he obtained for us as a guide. It seemed unwise to get into the mountains again. Besides, they were so black with vapour shadows that we could see nothing from them. The order was given, therefore, for Inca, which is about ten miles from Lluch, and in the hot plain country.

A pretty, but conventional southern scene was before us as we strode up the monastery precincts. The ancient battered stone cross stands near the beginning of the avenue, and round its base several mule-men and a woman were upon their

knees. This cross is the centre of many devotional exercises during the summer festivals of Our Lady of Lluçh.

We had gone but a little way along the thigh of a mountain when we came to a spectacle of activity and devastation that seemed almost sacrilegious. The road-men were at work blasting and hewing at the hard basaltic rocks. They had already reached within two miles of Lluçh from the lowlands. By now—1892—therefore, the tourist may drive in his carriage from Inca, or even Palma, to this lovely sequestered mountain resort. In all probability a good hotel will soon rise here, which may or may not be regarded as a gain for the public. Truly, when the Spaniards do set about road-making they carry the work through with admirable pluck. Majorca is worthy to rank with the Canary Islands for the magnificence of its highways of the first order. All the same, we did not care for this apparition of energy in the middle of the mountains.

But anon we left the road-men behind us, and passed from one mountain slope to another, ever descending. It was a race with the clouds, in which, however, at length we were beaten. The rain fell in sheets. There was little shelter; but we managed to screen under a boulder-slab and an umbrella-pine with fair success.

The scenery was not so sensational as that behind us; but it was decidedly bold. The contrast, too, between the hot yellow plain at our feet—of which we had glimpses at every mountain corner—and our own gloomy neighbourhood was racy. At length we were well out of the hill district, with immense olive-woods about us and barley fields, with here and there a white house, and a line of windmills in the distance betokening the town of Inca. The sun burnt us in the downright Majorcan manner. The white dust rose in clouds with the storm gusts from the mountains, and we were nearly choked at times. It was by no means an enjoyable experience after our mountain days.

The white road seemed interminable, and the windmills unattainable. We went through a village with spotless domestic interiors and clay-coloured peasants, who seemed mightily astonished to see strangers like ourselves; and well they may have been, for it was madness in us to tramp in this part of the island. They gave us distasteful wine to drink, which did but increase our desire for an honest hearty meal at Inca.

Very glad we were at length to reach this pretty quaint old town, with its shops and big church, and orange gardens, and chief of all its inn, where the good people promised us a meal in a flash of lightning; which meant in rather more than an hour's time.

We tarried at Inca until the evening train to Palma. From the railway the little town looked peculiarly winning, with its lichened buildings and bright spring verdure. But here, as everywhere in Majorca, the chief glory lay in the mountains. They were terrifically black in the rear; coal-black is the very word for them and the clouds over them. As we tarried at one of the little stations in the sunlight, with barley, and olive-trees, and vineyards all around, and the chirrup of grasshoppers loud in our ears, we heard also the bellow of thunder from the hills. It was as clear as anything that we were well out of that romantic part of the island. Our walking kit was for fine weather alone, and we were favoured with exceptional kindness, for in the west of the island in spring the thunderstorms are proverbial.

THE UNBIDDEN GUEST.

A STORY IN TWO CHAPTERS. CHAPTER I.

CHESNEY HALL was in the market again. It was really quite remarkable how often Chesney Hall had been in the market in the course of the last century or so. The original Chesneys having died out somewhere about the reign of good Queen Anne, the bare bones of the estate had passed to a distant relative who, not being able to keep up the old place in the style it deserved, had done the wisest thing he could under the circumstances, and sold it.

After that the Hall passed from one purchaser to another, for somehow it never remained in any one's hands very long. It was a delightful old mansion, charmingly situated in well-wooded grounds, and possessing almost every attribute the heart of the antiquarian could desire. But we are not all antiquarians; many of us have aspirations which even endless vistas of black oak wainscoting and monumental carved chimney-pieces fail to satisfy. Besides, to use the words of one of those who came and went: "There's something queer about the place. I won't go so far as to say that it is haunted—after all a ghost is decidedly good form, and I know some people, with-

out a grandfather to their backs, who would be willing to give almost any price for the real genuine family article. There may be a ghost at the Hall, and there may not; but what I object to chiefly is the feeling of being there on sufferance, which I can't get rid of, and won't stand. And then there's that other affair — deuced queer that was!"

Of course this might not have been the objection in every case; but the fact remained that the people who came and joyfully took possession of the old Hall generally took still more joyful leave. To quote one more authority, and that of a member of the opposite sex: "I can't exactly say what it was, dear, but to tell the truth, I never felt thoroughly comfortable all the time we were there—that was three years, you know, and all that while I seemed to be doing nothing but look over my shoulder. Then there was that other drawback I told you of—though of course that didn't matter in the summer; but for the rest of the year it was very inconvenient, and no explanation worth calling an explanation to account for it."

Now Chesney Hall, after having been for a period in the possession of a wealthy ironmonger, was again in the market, and the question was, would a purchaser be forthcoming this time?—for it was impossible to deny that the reputation of the Hall had suffered a little through its frequent change of hands. The question was soon answered, and in less than six months Chesney Hall became the property of a Mr. Joseph Blenkinshaw, of whom little was known beyond the fact that he was supposed to be worth at least a million of money, and was apparently bitten by the desire to transform himself from a mere City man into a country gentleman.

This at least was the rumour, and though rumour is not always to be depended on, it was not so very far out in this case. Mr. Joseph Blenkinshaw was perhaps not worth quite so much as was reported; but for all that he was a very wealthy man who, having acquired a fortune through successfully trading in hides, or tallow, or something equally odoriferous, had of late had it borne in upon him that having spent the greater part of his life in the gathering together of riches, it was time that he devoted himself to the enjoyment of the same.

This idea having for some time past been presenting itself more and more clearly to his mind, Mr. Joseph Blenkinshaw suddenly announced to his family his intention

of retiring from business, and devoting the remainder of his span to an entirely new round of duties.

"I have been turning it over in my mind for some months past," he explained collectively to his wife and son and daughter, "and I have made up my mind to try the country. It would be of no earthly good retiring unless I went right away. So long as I remained within a reasonable distance of town I should always be running up and down."

His family agreed with him. They usually did agree with him, having been brought up to do so.

"Besides," he went on, "pure country air, with plenty of exercise and no worry, ought to add a good ten years to one's life, and with my means no doubt we should be able to take a very good position. I shall look out for a house and estate—I should prefer something old and ancestral—go in for good old-fashioned hospitality and that sort of thing, and," he waved his right hand expressively, "there you are, don't you know, or, rather, there you will be."

The murmurs of approbation from the family circle having subsided, he cast a reflective eye upon his offspring. Both were good-looking in their way—which was not the same way as their father's—the girl, indeed, having, as it were, only escaped beauty by the tip of her nose.

Mr. Blenkinshaw's eye brightened with a mingling of the fatherly and commercial instinct.

"Geraldine, with her looks, should make a fine match. Arthur, too, with his advantages and a University education, ought to be able to pick up some one worth having. However, of course that is all in the Future."

And this is how the Blenkinshaws came to Chesney Hall.

Chesney Hall! Mr. Blenkinshaw used to roll the name over his tongue with unction. It looked well, it sounded well, and it even seemed to taste well, but for all that—why not Blenkinshaw Hall?—not just at present, perhaps, but in the Future. Mr. Blenkinshaw was fond of talking about the Future—with a capital "F."

Meanwhile nothing has been said about Mrs. Blenkinshaw; she has been hinted at and that is all. In fact Mrs. Blenkinshaw's whole personality seemed to consist of hints which had not been carried out. Her complexion, her hair, her features, her attire, were all of a vague and sketchy

description, as though they had never been properly filled in. In character she was the same. Her likes and dislikes, her thoughts and opinions, were mostly the reflection of some one else's. Under these circumstances it was the more remarkable that she should have ventured to take a sudden and incomprehensible dislike to her new abode. The first sight of it made her turn pale, and as she crossed its threshold for the first time she shivered and made as though she would have turned back.

"Emma!" exclaimed Mr. Blenkinshaw, in justifiable amazement. "Why do you hang back? That is not the proper way in which to make your entrance into your new home. What do you think of the hall with its magnificent black oak chimney-piece? Rather different to our modern fireplaces, eh? And how is it you don't remark the effect of the stained-glass window, with the arms of the Cheaneys, and the Musicians' Gallery, and the Dutch tiles, and the groined roof? Of course, I am quite aware that you cannot help admiring it all, but I should prefer you to express your admiration a little more volubly. After the trouble I've taken, and the money I've laid out, I must say I think a little something of the sort might have been looked for."

"My dear Joseph," murmured the lady in faltering tones, "it—it's perfectly charming, but—but I can't help thinking of what the lawyer said about—you know what, and really I'm afraid you'll think me unkind, and I'm very, very sorry, but I'm afraid I prefer Streatham."

Streatham, indeed! No wonder Mr. Blenkinshaw felt like quoting certain lines from "King Lear" on the subject of ingratitude, only unfortunately he could not quite call them to mind beyond the fact that they began with "Blow, blow," and undoubtedly this was a blow, and a heavy blow to him to think that a member of his family should actually be so lost to all sense of what was right and fitting as to prefer Streatham and its associations to Cheaney Hall, with its park and its plantations, its avenue, its imposing entrance, its banqueting hall, its irregularities and inconveniences, and, above all, its genuine ancestral flavour. It was—it was past all belief, and absurd beyond words, but for all that it was the cause of Mr. Blenkinshaw's first disappointment in connection with his new home.

If it had only been any one else but

Emma—Geraldine or Arthur for instance. The young people of the present day were only too fond of finding fault—but Emma, who had never been known to possess an opinion exclusively her own before!

However, he soon forgot all about it as he made his first royal progress over his new domain; pointing out this and that and the other; claiming praise not only for what he had done, but also for what he had left undone. On the whole, his taste really called for approbation; for, unlike the majority of men who have made a large fortune by buying and selling, he had been content to leave many things as he found them, and had avoided the Scylla of over-gilding, as well as the Charybdis of plate-glass.

To be sure, the ornate modern furniture which had been transferred from Mrs. Blenkinshaw's lamented Streatham appeared a little out of tune with its surroundings; and it even appeared, from the awkward attitudes assumed by some of the chairs and tables, that they were themselves aware of the incongruity.

Geraldine and Arthur Blenkinshaw raved about the place, and for the first week or two were always coming upon fresh delightful surprises in the shape of quaint cupboards, unsuspected trap-doors, and even an old oak chest or two, which, with other remnants of antiquity, had long ago been cast aside as lumber, but were now eagerly brought to light and made much of. But the chief treasure-trove of all was a Family Portrait. It was discovered in the corner of a cobwebby garret, standing with its face to the wall behind a pile of ancient dusty tomes, few of which bore a date later than that of the seventeenth century. The two young explorers, encouraged by previous successes, had penetrated there in search of the curious and the antique, had pounced upon the volumes, the merest contact with which produced a violent fit of sneezing, and finally had spied and disinterred the ancestor—for that it was a genuine ancestor no one could doubt for an instant, though at the time of the discovery the Portrait was so black with age and dirt, and so festooned with cobwebs, that it was impossible to predict the sex.

Arthur Blenkinshaw, having removed a little of the accumulation with his handkerchief—after which he forgot himself and wiped his face with the same, with variegated results—exposed to view a chin and a portion of lace collar.

"I think it must be a woman, Gerry," he remarked thereupon; "men don't wear lace collars."

"Oh, don't they though—at least, didn't they? Why, have you forgotten Charles the First's lace collar that he wore at his execution, on a velvet cushion at Madame Tussaud's? Besides, look at the chin! That looks like hair on it. I'm convinced it's a man; anyhow, we'll take it down to father; he'll be delighted, particularly if it should turn out to be one of the original Chesneys. Ugh! that's the fourteenth dead spider I've come across. As for you, Arthur, you look like a study in black and white."

So they carried it down in solemn procession, Geraldine going first to clear the way, while Arthur followed bearing the precious relic. Both of them were dusty and disorganised as to person, and more or less streaky of countenance, but both wore an expression of complacency which not even smudges could obscure; and it was in this manner that they burst in upon their father in the room which he was pleased to designate his study—not that he ever studied anything in it except the "County Directory" or the money article in "The Times."

Mr. Blenkinshaw was charmed. He had the picture carefully packed and despatched forthwith to one of the best known firms for cleaning and renovation, and awaited the result with impatience. Meanwhile Mrs. Blenkinshaw still pined for Streatham.

For some time after the arrival of the new people the neighbourhood was agitated by the great question—to visit or not to visit? Mr. Blenkinshaw had been in business, and though he had now cast himself adrift from his plebeian associations, he and his were nevertheless enveloped in that commercial atmosphere which is so excessively trying to patrician lungs. Still, as time went on and reports were circulated as to the kind of establishment maintained at the Hall, together with an account of the number and variety of the new equipages which had been sent down from London, it began to be felt that such qualifications should not be allowed to go unrecognised. Some one had it on good authority, too, that though old Blenkinshaw was a mere parvenu, and the wife a nonentity, the son and daughter were really quite presentable, and would be extremely eligible parties.

So the mountain came to Mahomet and

left cards, and Mr. Blenkinshaw began to forget the City and its ways, and regard himself as the founder of a family. Indeed, to such an extent and with such rapidity did this oblivion increase, that at the end of some six months' residence at the Hall he could hardly have undertaken to direct any one from St. Paul's Churchyard to the Monument.

To go back a little way. Allusion has twice been made at the commencement of this narrative to a drawback of some kind which existed independently of those other intangible disqualifications, the origin and seat of which were supposed to be the imagination. What the nature of this drawback was I will now explain.

On the day that the final arrangements concerning the purchase of Chesney Hall were completed, a somewhat singular statement was made to the new purchaser by one of the members of the legal firm in whose hands all business in connection with the sale of the estate was vested.

"By the way," he remarked, with an elaborate affectation of indifference, "there is one circumstance to which I may as well call your attention, though it is really hardly worth mentioning. The fact is," he went on, instituting an imaginary search for a fictitious document among the papers before him, "though I can't vouch for it myself (whatever can I have done with it?), but there is a—what shall I call it?—a little superstition with regard to your new purchase which concerns the great fireplace in the old banquetting hall. You have remarked the magnificent carved chimney-piece, which is supposed to be one of the finest examples of the kind to be found anywhere? Yes; well, the report is," here he affected to discover the object of his search, "the report is that no fire can ever be lighted upon that hearth, or if lighted will not burn."

Mr. Blenkinshaw opened his eyes and his mouth, and got as far as, "Well, I nev—"

"Of course you are at liberty to try," cut in the lawyer, "but I am advised to recommend you not to make the attempt, as you are certain to be unsuccessful, and it is even supposed," here he laughed a dry, dusty laugh, "it is even supposed to bring you ill-luck."

"But why on earth—" began Mr. Blenkinshaw.

"My dear sir," interrupted the lawyer again, "I know nothing—absolutely nothing. I should say it is probably

owing to some fault in the construction—but I am no authority on chimneys. For all that," he concluded, "it is sometimes as well to—er—humour these old traditions, without which scarcely any gentleman's residence can be considered complete."

Mr. Blenkinshaw, after a little consideration of the matter, found himself disposed to take the lawyer's advice. After all, a tradition was a decidedly gentlemanly sort of appurtenance. It was the kind of thing which only went with the best families, and was one of the few articles which even a first-class upholsterer could not undertake to supply. All the same he didn't believe it. Did you mean to tell him—Joseph Blenkinshaw, Esq., of Chesney Hall—that he couldn't light a fire on his own hearth? Pshaw! He cherished the tradition and was willing to humour it, but at the same time he scoffed at the idea; and so, when it was imparted to them, did the other members of his family, with the exception of Mrs. Blenkinshaw, who was understood to express herself vaguely in favour of a gas-stove. However, as it was mild spring weather when the Blenkinshaws came to the Hall, the question of fire or no fire was postponed, and Mr. Blenkinshaw hugged his tradition to his bosom and affected to believe it. Moreover, he dined daily in the banqueting hall, which could have accommodated half the county, and grew in pride and importance daily; though Mrs. Blenkinshaw, who at dinner occupied a position with her back to the fireplace, complained feebly of draught, and seemed to see a Sword of Damocles suspended over the soup tureen.

UNCONSCIOUS CONSCIOUSNESS.

IN the year 1889 the present writer laid before the readers of *ALL THE YEAR ROUND* some observations and reflections on the subject of Memory, Somnambulism, and Alternate Consciousness.* We saw then how in sleep not only may the mind be lulled into temporary forgetfulness, but also how latent memory may be revived. We saw how there are, in some people at any rate, certain states of mind sharply divided from each other, yet connected by the bridge of memory, so that two minds seem to be

alternately operating in the same person. We saw also, by some curious examples of somnambulant consciousness, that men may have a double memory—one side latent when the other is active. Since we wrote, the subject of hypnotism has occupied a great deal of popular, as well as of scientific, attention, and its various characteristics have been warmly discussed.

Yet the extent to which the cerebral faculties are really awake during artificial sleep has not yet been fully determined, and there is one aspect of the subject to which we invite the consideration of our readers for a little. It is this: Is a person in a condition of sleep artificially produced (i.e., hypnotised), necessarily in a state of suspended free-will?

It may be remembered that, writing about artificial somnambulism, we said that the peculiarity of the magnetic sleep is that, while much deeper than the natural sleep, the "inner waking" is also more complete and more clear. "When we endeavour to recall a dream," we said, "we can usually only reproduce a confused mental picture, composed of disjointed materials taken, without apparent connection, out of our waking life; and yet, if a dreamer were asked while dreaming if he slept, he would assuredly answer, 'No,' for the dream is with him an actual exercise of consciousness." And so with the "inner waking" of somnambulists—it is reality to their intelligence. In ordinary sleep, those who have been born blind have dream-images, and it is said that in somnambulism the born-blind actually see.

So far, memory and impression; but what we have to consider now is suggestion, or even conversion, in the mesmeric state. Can a naturally good and moral person be prompted to criminal actions in a hypnotic state? Can a person with naturally criminal instincts be kept to moral courses under the influence of mesmerism?

The French school of mesmerists hold, as a rule, to the belief that in a hypnotic subject free-will can be so obliterated that the most moral may become vitiated, and the most high-minded perverted, under the influence of the magnetiser. This is so terrible an assumption that one welcomes any arguments and examples in evidence of its unsoundness. Professor Delboeuf, who has written much about hypnotism in various learned periodicals, has quite lately afforded some, of which we gratefully avail ourselves. This scientist, it should be

* See "Somnambulism," No. 27, Third Series; "Some Phenomena of Memory," No. 30; and "Alternate Consciousness, No. 33.

explained, introduced hypnotism into the science-course of the Royal Academy of Belgium by means of two works of his own, and himself began the practice in the firm belief that the subject mesmerised becomes the property, so to speak, of the magnetiser. This is what he wrote in describing a visit to the Salpêtrière some years ago:

"The somnambulist in the hands of the hypnotiser . . . is a slave, with no other will than that of his ruler, and in order to fulfil the commands laid upon him he will push precaution, prudence, cunning, dissimulation, and falsehood to their extremest limits."

Assuredly, then, the power of the hypnotiser must be one of the most dangerous things on the face of the earth. But is it so great, or may not the fear of it be unduly exaggerated? The learned writer, almost immediately after publishing the words just quoted, was struck with the difficulty, which seems to amount to an impossibility, of obtaining from a hypnotised subject an absolute abnegation of will-power, whilst at the same time allowing him the necessary free-will to cope with any unforeseen accidents which may occur in the completion of the orders he is to carry out. As the result of further study and experiment M. Delboeuf has come to the conclusion that a villain who is contemplating the perpetration of a crime will not easily find an accomplice in a (hypnotised) subject of good moral standing, and that in any case such an accomplice would not only be inapt but compromising.

Here, however, is an experiment which seems to afford contrary evidence. It occurred at Nancy last year, in the hospital there, and was witnessed by some five or six Belgian professors and physiologists. One of the patients, a big, strong man, was thrown into a magnetic sleep, and ordered that when he awoke he was to go and steal an orange from the bed of another patient in the ward. He was told that what he was about to do was wrong, and might be punished, but that, nevertheless, he must do it. He was waked, and arose with the appearance of one who had something on his mind, and, when questioned, said he had something to do, but would not tell what it was. Presently he walked over to the bed of the other patient—a "mate" of his own, who had heard what had been ordered, and who stoutly expressed the belief that his friend would

not steal from him—and when he thought he was not being watched, seized the orange and slipped it into his pocket.

This would seem a case of criminal suggestion promptly acted upon by an innocent subject. But when the man was, a little later, charged with the theft, he first denied it, and then justified it on the plea (which satisfies a good many consciences) that the man to whom the orange belonged had not seen it taken and would not miss it, and that "it's not stealing when it isn't missed." Subsequently it was discovered that this same "subject" was in the habit of abstracting a little tobacco from his companions on the same principle. In short, he had latent tendencies to theft, and was, therefore, an apt subject for criminal suggestion.

Here is a curious instance recorded in the "Revue Philosophique" of 1886, of an experiment in a college class:

"B. is in the hypnotic sleep. We wish to give him some peculiar order which he shall execute, after he is awake, at a special signal. The signal is to be a knock given by the Professor on the desk; the action, to carry a glass of water to the student E. He does not know any of the fifteen students present, nor has he yet heard their names. The pupils take their places without any special order, some standing, some sitting. B. is awakened, we chat a little, I give the signal, B. rises, fills a glass, and without the slightest sign of hesitation, carries it to the student before mentioned, who was sitting on one of the back benches beside a fellow-student. We looked at each other with stupefaction. The intention of the experiment had been to see how he would obey an obscure command. . . . I again throw him into the sleep, and I command him to carry a glass of water to the student Gerard. We are all standing, awaiting with impatience what will take place. B. fills the glass, and this time sends a questioning look over all the spectators, presents the glass first to one then to another; and, finally, I had to point out the student Gerard, to whom he brought the water and made him drink it. I again put him to sleep and asked him to whom he carried the first glass of water? 'To E.' 'Did you know him?' 'No.' 'How did you recognise him?' 'By his attitude; he looked as if he wanted to hide away.'"

What does this prove? Not the abnegation of free-will, but rather the sharpen-

ing of the faculties by hypnotism. B. knew that he had to do something, and was quick-minded enough to take his cue from his surroundings. Now, keeping in mind this experiment and its explanation, look at one recorded by Professor Liégeois, who is a strong upholder of the "absolute automatism" of the hypnotic subject.

"I offered N. a white powder, of the nature of which he is ignorant. I said to him, 'Pay great attention to what I am about to tell you. This paper contains arsenic. You will go presently to such a street to your Aunt M.—who is here now. You will take a glass of water, carefully dissolve the arsenic in it, and then you will offer it to your aunt.' 'Yes, sir.' That evening I received the following note from Madame M.: 'Madame M. begs leave to inform M. Liégeois that the experiment succeeded perfectly. Her nephew offered her the poison.' The criminal remembered nothing about it, and it was very difficult to persuade him that he had indeed wished to poison an aunt for whom he had a deep affection. The automatism had been complete."

Very difficult, indeed, one would imagine; but had the automatism been complete? The subject knew that his aunt was in the room when he was ordered to poison her, and that she heard every word of the order. When he woke up he knew he had to do something; but did he not also know that what he had to do was only an experiment, and that he could not seriously be expected to poison an aunt who was a party to the experiment? As M. Delbœuf pertinently remarks of similar experiments, a hypnotic subject is not an idiot—quite the reverse.

Now let us take two instances which seem dissimilar in result.

Dr. Liébault, a famous specialist, tells of the case of a workman whom he hypnotised and told to steal a couple of plaster figures from the mantelpiece of a house in which he was engaged on some job. This was direct criminal suggestion, which was at once acted on by the man. The incident was forgotten; but some three months later this same workman was arrested for the theft of a pair of trousers from a shop. Like the Nancy Hospital patient, Dr. Liébault's subject was naturally disposed to pilfering, and evidently did not need to be hypnotised to entertain criminal suggestions.

The other case is related by Professor Delbœuf of an experiment in his own family with a woman—referred to as "J."—who had been proved to be an excellent som-

nambulist, and who is referred to in several of Delbœuf's writings in connection with other experiments.

The story concerns a six-barrelled revolver, which, in the Professor's remote residence, was always kept loaded at a time when the country was in a disturbed state owing to strikes. The Professor happened to be from home, and one night the house was attempted. J. seized the revolver, knowing it to be loaded, and went to face the burglar, who fled. Thereafter J. slept with the loaded revolver beside her bed in a room on the ground-floor, being a woman of resolution and courage. The incident suggested an experiment to the Professor on his return, which had better be told in his own words:

"The 24th February, 1888, without communicating my intentions to anybody except my daughter, and that only at the very moment of beginning the experiment, I discharged the revolver. It was six o'clock in the evening. A young lady—herself an hypnotic subject—and my daughter were seated at a table cutting out articles from a newspaper, which they afterwards tied up in bundles. I called J., and at the moment she opened the door I hypnotised her by a motion. I said to her in an agitated voice: 'Here are some thieves who are carrying off papers.'

"J. came quickly forward and, turning towards me, said: 'No, sir; they are playing with them—why, sure enough, they are taking them!' Then she walked resolutely up to them and tore the papers out of their hands, put them on the table in front of her, and in an imperious tone said: 'Don't you touch them any more.'

"I said: 'You are never going to let those knaves remain in the house? Run and fetch the revolver.'

"J. ran without hesitation. She returned, holding the weapon in her hand, and stood on the threshold.

"'Fire!' I cried.

"'Sir, we must not kill them.'

"'Thieves! Why, certainly!'

"'No, sir! I will not kill them.'

"'You must.'

"'I won't do it'; and she walked backwards, still holding the revolver, I following her and energetically reiterating my command.

"'I won't, I won't do it. I will not murder.' She then placed the revolver on the floor, but cautiously. She continued to go backwards, I meanwhile insisting and following her. 'I will not do it.'

"Having come to a dead stand in the corner of the room she repulsed me violently, and I thought it prudent to awaken her, upon which she came to herself, smiling in her usual pleasant manner. She remembered, however, nothing whatever, although at the sight of the revolver lying on the floor she seemed to have a kind of vague recollection. She did not seem at all discomposed in manner. If this scene had taken place in a dream she would certainly have exhibited more excitement."

Here, then, we have a well-known hypnotic, supposed to be thoroughly under the influence of a master who could hypnotise her at any moment, but who refused to surrender her moral sense to the mesmeric influence. Unlike the two pilferers, she had no natural tendency to crime, and she shrank from crime even when otherwise ready to do all she was told.

What, then, is to be inferred? Probably, that J. was not the victim of a hallucination at all, but a sort of conscious unconscious actor in a play. Doubtless she recognised the two young ladies, and then, in obedience to the word of command, regarded them as robbers for the purposes of the play. In all this she would be sincere enough, and acting with a double consciousness only partly awakened. But when it came to the revolver, which she believed to be loaded, and to discharge which she knew—or thought—would be murder, then her moral nature asserted itself, and she was enabled to exercise her own free-will, even when otherwise acting as a puppet or automaton.

The whole subject is very curious, and this is an interesting illustration of one of its phases. The more we consider the matter the more we are convinced that hypnotised subjects are more or less conscious players in a part which they feel themselves compelled to play, knowing all the time it is only acting, even although when awakened they may be unable to recall their sensations and explain their movements.

Delboeuf now takes this view, and points to another illustration. If you extend the arm of a hypnotic and defy him to put it down, he seems to make an effort to lower it, but he makes no real effort. In fact, he does not bring his muscles into play at all; but if the spectators try to force him to change the position of his arm, he opposes all his muscular resistance. Why? Because he

knows that a certain thing is required of him by the person under whose influence he is for the time being.

Any one who has witnessed public exhibitions of mesmerism must be prepared to admit that hypnotic subjects may perfectly well realise that they are the subjects of experiments. Some are more facile than others, and will submit out of amiability or moral weakness to being put to all sorts of ridiculous uses for the amusement of the audience, while others will rebel when their finer feelings are aroused. Such cases go to prove that at least a number of hypnotics retain a certain amount of independence. Why should we suppose this is not true of all?

We cannot explain the psychological problem; we can only state its probable conditions, and these are certainly both more reasonable and more agreeable than the theory of absolute automatism. Delboeuf's theory now is that "persons in hypnosis will only execute acts similar to those they would naturally perform in dreams."

What do we all do in dreams? Pretty much what we do in waking life. The present writer, whose profession is journalism, constantly finds himself in dreams composing leading articles, and even tabulating masses of statistics, with which he has occasionally to deal. He has dreamed a whole three-volumed novel, and he has been conscious of laying down page after page of the most methodical (and doubtless the most wooden) of blank verse, not a line of which could he recall on waking. But he has never dreamed a sermon, nor a brief, nor a mathematical problem, nor a play, nor an essay on Greek verbs, nor a treatise on the integral calculus—doubtless because these are subjects which he would never think of attempting in waking life.

His experience is in no way peculiar. We all dream of things such as we have done or would like to do—not of things repugnant to our natures or foreign to our experiences. Coleridge could dream "Kubla Khan" because he was a poet, but he could never have dreamed of cutting the throat of Charles Lamb in order to procure the MS. of "A Dissertation on Roast Pig," to publish it as his own. Yet, conceivably, a most amiable and inoffensive novelist, whose business is to write stories of crime and sensation, might dream that he had committed a murder, not because he could or would commit one, even in a hypnotic state, but because he is tem-

porarily incorporated with one of the creatures of his own imagination.

We incline greatly to Delbœuf's now boldly avowed opinion—the reverse of what he formerly held—that hypnotism is less powerful in inciting to actions of grave moral import than the corrupting influence of word, example, avarice, or passion. The doctrine of the future, he holds, is the analogy between physiological and incited dreams. That is to say, if a hypnotised person appears to suppose that he is made of sugar or glass, to feel that he is melting in the rain, or is about to be shattered by a bystander; or if he thinks himself a lamp and sits on a table; or allows himself to be trundled like a wheelbarrow, we are not, therefore, to suppose that he has wholly surrendered his free-will. If a man refuses to steal or to strike a blow when ordered, or if a woman refuses to forget her modesty, then we must admit that the hypnotic subject has still power over himself, and that the influence of the mesmerist is limited by the moral nature of the subject.

Delbœuf, then, affirms this of the hypnotic condition, that, reasoning by analogy, the subject who refuses to give a blow will never be made to use the knife; and that the woman who refuses any token of affection will certainly resist any serious tampering with morals. What he maintains, and what has been our purpose to show, is, that even under hypnotic influence men and women preserve a sufficient portion of their intelligence, reason, and free-will to prevent them from doing what, in ordinary conditions, their consciences would not approve nor their habits sanction.

THE LATE MRS. VERNON.

BY A. MOBERLY.

Author of "Lady Valeria," etc., etc.

CHAPTER IV.

"I TOLD you so!" cried nurse next day, as she came in smiling over a basket of white lilies. "These are the last you'll get, I'm afraid, though," she went on with a quaint, disconsolate hitch of her eyebrows. "I let him get out of me how you'd treated the others. There's his card with these. I told him I was sure you knew him and didn't want to see him."

Lieut.-Colonel Miles Fortescue,
(late) Royal Artillery.

"I wish Dr. Millar was in the army! They do dress so much better than doctors!" sighed she, contemplating the card admiringly.

I heard a good deal about my visitor's handsome dark eyes, nice white moustache, courtly manners, hat, boots, and overcoat during the day, till I wondered what Dr. Millar would have said about it. The interview seemed to have been of the briefest, and confined to enquiries after my health and the prospect of an early interview.

Colonel Fortescue falsified nurse's predictions by renewing my supply of flowers daily, but did not come himself till a week later.

There was no reason why I should not see him by this time. I had been sitting up for the greatest part of the day, partially dressed and muffled up, reading or staring dreamily into the plane-tree outside, some of the leaves of which were now taking an autumnal tinge of yellow. Dr. Walsham's visits were becoming perfunctory. He addressed me markedly and persistently as "Mrs. Vernon," and I studiously accepted the name without the slightest shade of hesitation. Nurse called me so as a matter of course. What did it matter? Every day brought me nearer to the time when I should be free of them all.

A note came to me at last.

"MY DEAR MRS. VERNON" (my hand shook as I held it, and I felt as if I were doing a dishonourable thing in reading further, but there was no help for it)—"Will you see me and soon? I know that you do not think of me as a friend, perhaps you even mistrust me. I admit that you may have cause to do so, but give me the chance of justifying myself, if not for my own sake, for Muriel's. It is in Muriel's name and Muriel's interests that I beg of you this favour. I hope in time to prove that you have no more faithful friend and servant than

"Yours most truly,

"MILES FORTESCUE"

"For Muriel's sake!" That was a spell to conjure with. I asked for a pencil, but my hand shook and refused to make a legible mark. I threw it aside impatiently.

"Tell him—to-morrow—for Muriel's sake." The words slipped past my lips unconsciously and I buried my face in my pillows in a fit of uncontrollable weeping.

Next morning the matron, when she

came for her visit, brought with her my rings and other valuables, and my keys, and gave them over into my keeping.

A sick shudder came over me as I looked at them. There was a locked drawer in my dressing-table, and I asked nurse to put all away in it, except an old-fashioned ring of my own, with a deep, heavy setting, which I put on. It covered up the wedding-ring, which as yet I dared not discard. The others had been cut, a sufficient reason for not wearing them.

Nurse Magrath looked at them in ecstasy.

"One, two, three diamond hoops, and a ruby and a sapphire, and this big emerald! Oh!" with a gasp of appreciation, "doesn't it make you happy to wear them?"

"Not at all!" I declared. "I wish I might give you one in return for all your kindness to me; but though I may wear them, they are not mine to dispose of."

"Well, I wish they were," she replied frankly; "but I suppose they're heirlooms, or entailed, or something. Won't you wear your locket?"

I held out my hand for it in silence. The black velvet was stained and stiff in one place—I knew why. I examined the beautiful enamel and diamond toy. It opened with a spring. Inside was a tiny miniature of a pretty, pink, featureless baby; opposite, a curl of soft yellow fluff, tied with a scrap of blue silk; underneath, in tiny gold letters, "Muriel."

Nurse caught a glimpse of it.

"That is the Muriel you raved about continually when you came here first. Is she your little girl?"

"I can't tell you anything about her now. Don't ask me!" I answered, with a sharpness that startled her.

She begged my pardon hurriedly, and diverted the conversation by asking what I meant to wear.

"You must be more dressed than you are. It will be just as comfortable in something nice instead of that dressing-gown and shawl, and more proper too, won't it?"

I assented hastily, just to keep her employed and from dangerous questionings. I fastened the locket round my neck as a token of the solemn charge I took upon me in receiving it from the hand of the dead woman, while nurse, in high glee, began to unpack the biggest trunk and examine the contents.

"Here are your dresses in this one, I see; we got your under-linen out of the other. Oh, how nice this is! Trays all

the way down to the bottom! May I look at them all?" I assented, and she plunged into the work with gusto. "This top and will be an evening dress, of course! No, I won't unfold it; I should never get it back again. How beautifully your maid has packed it! Oh, how lovely! Embroidery and silk gauze! Here's a velvet, and here's a silk. Would that be too smart, I wonder?"

"Much too smart," I said positively, thinking of my own one silk best dress, which had been my best for seven years, and had now become shiny enough to pass for satin, as Mrs. Tarrant was kind enough to inform me.

"Here's a cashmere. Oh, may I just open it and look at the body?"

I glanced at the vest, stiff with rich beaded embroidery, and shook my head.

"There must be some more underneath that."

"Of course; the very thing. Tea-gowns! I thought there would be something of the sort. Heliotrope velvet and surah. No! Well, grey satin, with cut steel embroidery? Then here's only a black plush one left."

I agreed, as she seemed to have come to the bottom of the box, and she took it out in great delight.

"Oh, lovely! It's a sin to keep it folded. I'll shake it out well and hang it up."

She went through the rest of the preparations for my toilette with leisurely enjoyment. Dr. Walsham had taken to pay his visits in the afternoon, so we had the long morning to ourselves.

She laid out everything I was likely to want, and repacked the trunk, then dressed me with as much pleasure as a child her doll.

"I'll make you look as nice as I can; but I don't know what you'll think of your hair. It had to be cut off, you know, and kept close when you were so very ill. It's growing a little, I think. Why, you haven't seen yourself yet."

I had not. I had never asked for a glass, and the dressing-table had been moved to allow my chair to be placed in the window.

"Don't look just yet, then. Wait till I've finished you." She brushed and smoothed delicately, and twisted my hair about over her fingers, and at last professed herself satisfied. "Your cap will hide all deficiencies, you know. Where shall I find it?" She dived into the box again,

emerging again with a distressingly fanciful construction of white lace and black jet. "I can't find anything else but black. You must wear something, you know, to cover the damages. It really couldn't be decent to go without."

"Lend me one of yours." But I felt the feebleness of the suggestion, and nurse had her way. I stood up and let her clothe me in the sumptuous folds of a long trailing gown of rich plush lined with satin, fastened with clasps of sparkling jet, and long, floating loops of watered ribbon, and furnished by Josephine's wise prevision with all needful adornments at neck and wrists of soft white frilling. Nurse Magrath almost shrieked with admiration when her work was achieved.

"Now it's done, and you may see yourself."

I stopped half-way to my chair, and she twisted the toilet-glass so that I could get a full view of myself. I looked at the figure in the glass, and the figure in the glass looked at me, but not for a moment did we seem to recognise one another. There was an old cracked mirror in the garret at the Tarrants', in which every morning a meagre, insignificant person, with an artificial tint of pale green and a distorted wave across her nose added to her already uninteresting appearance, used to part her hair straight and then brush it back and screw it into a severely tight knot behind, pin her collar, and depart, to look no more therein except when she tied her bonnet-strings to go to church on Sunday. Also in Mrs. Tarrant's drawing-room, amongst the lace and rose-coloured satin trimmings, there were bits of looking-glass stuck about, in which sometimes of an evening I caught sight of a white-faced, dingly clad person looking out of place and sleepy amidst the cigarette smoke and rather noisy conviviality which were wont to prevail at Mrs. Tarrant's entertainments.

I knew both of those reflections, and didn't like either; but who was this? A tall, pale woman with soft, dark hair waving thickly over her forehead; stately in rich, flowing garments, and diamonds blazing at her throat; sunken of cheek and hollow-eyed, but without the dull, care-laden air that I knew so well. My long rest and luxurious living had rubbed off the wrinkles, just as it had smoothed away the needle-pricks on my forefinger. All my ugly angles were buried deep in silky softness. Those absurd little waves

of hair on my forehead! I saw myself blush pink as I put up my hand.

"Oh, don't go and spoil it!" cried nurse, with tears in her voice. "Sit down at once. It is dinner-time," and she turned the disturbing looking-glass away.

Instead of my dinner, Dr. Walsham arrived. I was annoyed at being caught admiring myself, and received him with a touch of hauteur that seemed to astonish him.

"My dear, he wouldn't show it, but he was crushed—just crushed entirely!" cried nurse, when he was gone. "It was the gown did it, and the diamonds, and you looking like an empress. The poor creature!"

Then I dined, then I rested, or tried to do so, but all the time my breath came faster and faster and my heart fluttered at every distant noise. Yet how I strove for composure—how I rehearsed over and over again all I had to say—there was so much of it, it bewildered me. I answered nurse's chatter as if in a dream; I let her settle my dress, and "make a picture of me" as she would. I had kept but one white chrysanthemum from the cluster that came in the morning, and she brought it into prominence in a tiny vase. She covered the bed with an Indian shawl that she found in the box and the table with a square of Turkish embroidery that Josephine had packed for some reason or other, arranged the chairs, adjusted the light, and asked wistfully:

"Would you like me to stay here or not?"

I shook my head regretfully. I had the dead woman to think of as well as myself, and I must find, as well as my poor shaken wits would allow, whether he was her friend or foe.

Nurse consoled herself by tripping off to receive Colonel Fortescue, and the sudden calm that followed her departure spread itself gratefully over my wearied mind, and I sank into a peaceful slumber.

The sound of an opening door half roused me. I drew my hand across my eyes, and tried to recall my wandering senses; then, looking up, found myself face to face with Colonel Fortescue. He was standing by the table, as if he had stopped in hesitation, and his bright, kindly, dark eyes were bent on me with such a look of tender, reverential pity and anxiety as it had never been my lot to behold before on a human face. The callow military youths and gay old veterans who frisked round Mrs. Tarrant had re-

garded me—if they ever did so—much as a lively young Egyptian might have contemplated the mummy guest at a festival. The ladies never looked at me at all.

"You are very good to receive me, Mrs. Vernon; but ought I to stay? Do you feel strong enough?"

Look and voice thrilled through me like a draught of generous wine, strengthening, warming, comforting. It gave me courage to speak, though even in the speaking I fancied how the kindly look would change to surprised non-recognition when he saw my face more clearly.

"I am glad you are come. I wished to see you," I said boldly, rising and pointing to a chair near me, and then sinking down from sheer weakness.

I looked full at him as I spoke, but his face only relaxed into a genial smile.

"Did you? I could hardly have hoped that. I heard from the nurse how you took my first visit. And you wouldn't have my flowers; I had no right to expect anything else, I knew, but——"

"Hush!" I interrupted gently. "You do not understand. Before we say any more I must tell you"—it was coming now—"you are under a terrible mistake about me. Everybody is. You must not call me Mrs. Vernon any more. Don't blame me!" I cried impetuously, for his brow knit suddenly, and I saw a startled, distressed look dawn in his bright eyes. "I have done nothing wrong; I swear it. I wish—oh, how I wish to Heaven that I had died!" I stopped to collect myself. I knew I was getting incoherent. "Will you let me tell you how it all happened?"

"Not to-day, my dear lady," he said in a tone of authority. "I will see you again as soon as you wish, and we will talk over this miserable business from beginning to end, if you think it needful. You are not fit either to talk much or to listen just at present. I came here prepared to go into all manner of tedious legal business with you, but nothing shall induce me to do so now that I have seen you. It is a great thing gained," he went on in a lower tone, "that you have been willing to see me and meet me like a friend. It was a kindly thought to wear that—my poor little wedding present."

I saw his eyes rested on the diamond locket. Without a word I unfastened it and placed it open in his hand. His face lighted up with pleasure.

"I knew Muriel's mother was true to her and would not fail her," he said with

another of the bright, kind looks that thrilled me so strangely as he gave it back. Then he drew his chair nearer and seemed to speak more freely.

"I am only to be allowed a short time with you, may I use it to explain my own position? I know you must have thought of me all these years—if you have thought at all—as one of your enemies—no, don't let us put it that way—as on the other side. But what could I do? I was three hundred miles from England when it all happened, and when I came back the trial—well, things had gone too far for me to do anything. I went to Tom at once. I spoke strongly to him. I used words which if he had had the heart of a man in him he should have resented; but all he did say was, 'What on earth do you know about the matter?' And really I—I was unprovided with a satisfactory answer. Then I went to the family solicitors. They, I was gratified to see, had declined to take up your husband's case. I respected them for it and said so, and wanted to know what I could do. They told me that if I had any evidence to offer I might lay it before them; but if I came merely as a sentimental witness to character I should do you more harm than good. I saw they were right; but it maddened me to stand by indifferently while such a piece of wickedness was being perpetrated. Well, let's say no more about it. When all was over, Tom came to me and coolly said he couldn't see why it should make any difference between us. I would gladly have horsewhipped the fellow, and told him so; but he held on to me—just as he used to do in our Eton days. I can't understand why. Then it occurred to me that quarrelling with him was just the worst service I could render you—and Muriel. She was safe, with that good old aunt of hers; but a day might come, as it has come, when my being her father's friend might be of service. Then if Tom had some one always at hand from whom he could hear the plain truth, there might be some chance——" He stopped in some confusion.

"Chance of what?" I asked. I had been listening closely, picking what sense I could out of it all.

"Of a reconciliation with your husband. You know——"

"My husband!" I almost shrieked in my consternation at this new and most unexpected complication. I had made sure Mrs. Vernon was a widow. Good Heavens! Was there a living husband, and would he

insist on claiming me ! I felt myself turning ghastly at the idea.

"No, no ! Of course it could not be. There are some wrongs past human forgiveness ; but one never knows what a woman will do. But it's not to be thought of. You and Tom Vernon ! It's too horrible to imagine. Why, there are times when—knowing what I do of the fellow—I feel myself disgraced by shaking hands with him. And to be his wife !"

He fairly ground his teeth and his eyes grew wrathful. It was not with me, and it rather did me good to see it. But it was agitating, too.

"Tell me about Muriel," I managed to falter.

"I'll do better. You shall see her for yourself. I'll bring you face to face ; but mind, we must be cautious. How many people know you are here !"

"Only the hospital people and the railway company. I have no friends."

"So much the better. We must work in the dark. If it were known that you were in England, and lying here helpless, I don't know what scheme of iniquity it might not drive them into concocting. So you will keep quiet, will you not ?"

"I will see no one but yourself for the present," I readily promised. "But how did you know I was here ?"

"I met Maddison at the club. He's not a nice fellow, but I heard he knew you. He said something of having promised to meet you in Paris and escort you over, and how uncommonly glad he was he didn't. My dear, I'm sorry you should have made such friends !"

I kept silence, and he went on hurriedly and apologetically :

"I beg your pardon. I should have remembered the fault lies with those who drove you from your own. Maddison and his wife are off to the Mediterranean for the winter. I saw him go, and took care that he should hold his tongue about your movements. So far all is safe. How long do you stay here ?"

"I don't know. As long as they will keep me. Then I must get to work as soon as I can."

"To work !" His eyes opened wide with astonishment. "Why need you do that ? Surely you have your own money ? Was there no settlement ? Even if not, Tom would never refuse——"

I shook my head.

"I am not likely to receive one penny of Mr. Vernon's money," I said, laughing rather hysterically. "I have earned my own living. Ask my employer, Major Tarrant. Do, do ! I ask it as a favour. I'll give you his address."

It quieted me to see him writing it down carefully. I was making one step towards the truth. But the light in his eyes when he looked at me again fairly startled me.

"Then I need not ask you about that other money ? I could have sworn that you would never touch it. Forgive me ; I should never have named it to you but that I am so proud to have understood you so well."

Here the matron came in. The allotted time was over. I held out my hand, he took it in his strong, warm clasp, and looking up at him, I felt myself a pitiful, weak creature, and saw in his face how he would care for me and protect me if I would let him. The tears sprang to my eyes as I said :

"You have promised to hear me out next time we meet. Meanwhile I am sure you will do all that is right and wise for my—for Muriel's sake."

"And you will promise to be brave and strong. Remember that you are her only hope now. All is lost if you fail her. But you will not." He held my hand, still looking down on me with a fine chivalric glow on his handsome face. "We seem a poor pair of champions for her, do we not ? A battered old soldier and a delicate little thing like you ; but love is strength, and God will defend the right."

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MISS LATIMER OF BRYANS.

By ELEANOR C. PRICE.

Author of "Alexia," "Red Towers," "The Little One," etc.

CHAPTER X. SAINT CAROLUS.

DURING the long zigzag drive from the lake shore to Saint Carolus, Mrs. Nugent was a little troubled by doubts. She watched the face of her intended daughter-in-law, opposite to her in the carriage, with a certain anxiety. It was risking something, she felt, even with the excellent object of leaving a dangerous person behind, to take a girl with whose character she was not at all familiar, and who, behind those rather puzzling eyes of hers, might easily conceal depths unsounded by Aunt Fanny, into a remote mountain settlement like this, where there was absolutely nothing to do but to wander about and make love. If one was quite sure about that love-making, there could not be a better place. But as it was impossible to reckon confidently on an arrangement that would run on wheels, this Arcadian scenery might become tiresome. Even Arthur was not a positively sure card. He was very manageable to a certain point; but it was possible to make things too easy for him. Even his mother could not always be sure that he would walk exactly in the way marked out for him. He might rebel, and then Mrs. Nugent could not deny that, much as he admired Poppy Latimer, he was not literally and over head and ears in love with her. Otto knew that too, and had prophesied it. With all her beauty and distinction, she was not exactly the girl to take Arthur by storm; and he was not,

possibly, quite conscious enough of stern necessity to do any great violence to his own inclinations.

The two evidently liked each other. Already, in a day, it seemed natural that Arthur should walk beside Poppy, should carry her things, and pay her any little attention that came in his way. But this did not mean that the battle was won—very far from it; and Mrs. Nugent felt this as the two carriages climbed slowly to Saint Carolus.

Her bold stroke seemed bolder than ever. She had taken these two prisoners, her friend and her friend's niece, and was carrying them away into the mountains with one defined and confessed intention. She had not put it quite so barely to any of the three persons who shared fully in her confidence; but her intention was that her son and Miss Latimer's niece should only leave Saint Carolus engaged to each other. Somehow or other the thing must come to pass. Her son's half-heartedness only made her resolution stronger. None of her allies were of much use. Fanny had no real influence. Otto could do nothing, and Alice less; she and Poppy were too different to make friends. And the heart and mind of that girl opposite, with all her frankness, quietness, simplicity, were sealed books to Mrs. Nugent. She did not know, she could not guess, if by any possibility there might be an ally in that camp on the other side.

The road wound on, past untidy chalets crouching under their overhanging, stone-laden roofs; past one or two lonely hotels, each with its little carving-shop in attendance; between mounting green slopes, crowned with rocks and fir-woods on one side, and wild, irregular, shelving banks, clothed with dark firs and with the

changing green and gold of oak, beech, and birch on the other side, ending in steep green cliffs of fine turf, broken with ravines where sparkling streams played and dashed among the stones on their way down to the deep, blue-green lake. Beyond, where the woods broke away, one could see a great rampart of snow-peaks, with mysterious clefts and valleys leading to more wonderful hidden treasure-houses of that fairyland.

At last, as the afternoon light and colour was beginning to deepen in tone, the road made one of its many turns round the head of a ravine, where peasants in a high meadow, cutting their grass, looked down on the carriage with half-indifferent glances, and a little deformed man, sitting on a log by the roadside, tried to touch the travellers' hearts with doleful, long-drawn notes on a horn. A hundred yards more of steep hillside brought them to the door of the "Hôtel de la Suisse," or "Schweizerhof," of Saint Carolus.

"I'm afraid this place is very lonely," said Mrs. Nugent, bending forward to Poppy with an almost apologetic smile.

"Do you know," said Poppy, "I was just thinking that I like it better than anything I have ever seen in Switzerland."

The candid words and the frank smile touched Mrs. Nugent's heart. She was delighted. While Otto and Alice, who had got out of the first carriage, were talking to the landlady at the door, she laid her hand on Poppy's with a first and quite affectionate caress.

"My dear, you make me very happy. All the way up I have been tormenting myself with the thought that you might find it dull. And then I should feel so selfish, you know."

Miss Latimer, too, looked pleased. Arthur, coming to help them out, met a smile from his mother which almost startled him. She looked as if her dearest wish had just been gratified.

There could not be a stronger contrast than between Herzhelm and Saint Carolus. One breathed the very spirit of German Middle Age, and a hundred histories and legends seemed to cling about its bridges and towers and strange irregular roofs; while old enchantments hovered on the shores and the unknown depths of its dreamy water. Only the dashing river and the distant mountains seemed natural and alive, while the other was like a newly settled country. The Alp-dwellers of generations had left little mark on its broad

green slopes and woods. The dark châteaux scattered here and there looked as if they had grown out of the mountain; the air was pure, light, unbreathed; modern and civilised people had hardly begun to haunt the place. The great hotel was like an enormous chalet, all shining wood and balconies. It had been full earlier in the season, but some cold weather had driven people away, and one or two small and quiet parties were all that the new-comers found there.

Poppy woke at five o'clock in the morning with her ears full of the gentle clink of cow and goat-bells; the flocks and herds were being driven to pasture on the green alp above. She went to the window and looked out into the morning. Long lines of cloud hid the snow ranges, which the night before had shone red with sunset and lovely after-glow; and the nearer mountains, beyond the great valley and the lake, here almost hidden in its depths, stood out in the most intense and wonderful blue. It was hardly daylight; the sun had not risen, and that quiet land lay in the pure solemnity of dawn.

Poppy gazed out with earnest eyes. Her mouth was grave and set, yet some thoughts which were not unworthy to dwell with all that beauty soon brought something like a smile. It seemed to her as if that first dawn at Saint Carolus might mean a good deal. Clouds and mists, to be sure; but the blue of those mountains was far lovelier than any clear colour of midday, and she knew that the sun would rise presently. She was not a romantic or fanciful person, but she was an utterly candid person, who scorned to deceive herself. She had to confess that the last two days had been happy, and she did not pretend not to know why. Many young men might gladly have given all they possessed to have the place in Miss Latimer's thoughts that this invalid soldier, with his pale face, smiling eyes, and doubting heart, had already and almost unconsciously taken.

She had always heard a great deal about Arthur Nugent; he, even more than the rest of the family, had been a favourite subject with Aunt Fanny. Once, long ago, Aunt Fanny had said, referring to some man who hopelessly admired Poppy: "No; he won't do, my dear, certainly. I would rather you married Arthur." Arthur was then in India, not likely to come home for years. Poppy had never seen him, and particularly disliked this kind of talk. She only answered by a laugh, and Aunt

Fanny had never referred to the subject again. But for some time now she had been plotting the future secretly with Mrs. Nugent, and Poppy, innocent of any conspiracies, had never in fact forgotten that harmless little speech. She had always liked anything she heard of Arthur, and now, ill and broken down, a failure in his profession, he appealed to her strongest feelings—pity and sympathy. Since their meeting in that illuminated church porch, he had appealed to something more. Poppy was rather a puzzle to herself at this moment, but she was very far from being unhappy.

It was a strange week that came after that day's blue dawn. Alice confided to Otto that she had never been so bored in her life, and that this should be the last, the very last time that she would travel abroad with his family. Even the importance of the object, of which Otto smilingly reminded her, went for very little in the way of consolation. She shook her head; and Otto knew it to be such a clever head that he watched her with a shade of anxiety in his clear dark eyes.

"It's all very well," she said. "This Poppy of yours is not the right wife for Arthur. She will marry him, I dare say. Yes, she likes him in a quiet way, I think. But he is not a bit in love with her, you know. It would be better for everybody if she married her struggling painter. He is a nice creature, and adores her already. I think Miss Poppy flirted with him rather. Those moonlight talks—it was all a little hard on the poor man."

"Benevolence—only benevolence," said Otto. "Don't talk nonsense, my dear."

"Very well; as you please. I should not care for that sort of benevolence if I were a young man."

Alice's actions, in the way of forwarding her brother-in-law's cause, were better than her words. She was ready to carry out every little plan of Mrs. Nugent's, even if only hinted to her. She followed Otto's lead with an outward cheerfulness which never failed, and appeared to be the guiding spirit of several charming expeditions in which Mrs. Nugent and Miss Latimer did not think it necessary to join. On these occasions Alice was often seized with a wish to help Otto in botanising—a favourite pursuit of his—and while they two lingered among mosses in a wood, Arthur and Poppy, preferring dry air and glorious views, would stroll on across a broad green slope in clear sunshine, or

sit down to talk, perhaps, with a wall of spiring rocks and tall pines behind them, and precipices falling to a sea of blue mist, against which a dark tree might stand boldly out; and then beyond, out of that sea and half hidden by a belt of cloud, the Jungfrau and her companions would rise stately and cold, with ribbed glaciers and great curling wreaths of freshly fallen snow, so white, so soft and dreamy, that they too might have been clouds lying on the mountain's broad breast.

In such scenes as these it was Poppy's fate to make friends with Arthur Nugent. It seemed to her that she knew him better every day. She was not aware, being a little slow to notice shades in manner or in talk, that Arthur now kept a certain guard over himself, or rather, in truth, was unwilling to commit himself, and that the admiring looks and tones which had been so ready on first acquaintance had given place to a sort of quiet, level, intimate friendliness, which listened more than it spoke, and took more than it gave, having to do with a single-hearted generosity, a frank humility, which never made any conscious claim for itself. Arthur found it very pleasant to lounge on soft grass, or, safer and better, on a nice dry log or bench, by the side of a beautiful girl, and to hear her talk, and watch her changes of expression, and give her a great deal of agreement and sympathy. He liked it all; he thought Poppy more beautiful and more good than ever; and yet, as one day passed into another, he began to realise that he was not quite happy.

So far as it went it was delightful. There could be nothing sweeter than the way in which Poppy, with all her pride and her positiveness, turned to him for his worthless opinion on things that puzzled her—things often enough connected with Bryans and its management, which seemed to occupy her mind a good deal. And there could not, surely, be a happier prospect than the one which lay before him. It was impossible for the blindest man to help seeing now that he had only to stretch out his hand, to say a word, and his future was ensured; and this Bryans that she talked about so earnestly would be his, and past failures would matter no more than the smoke of past fires, and, if he chose, no worry or anxiety would ever trouble him any more.

Of course his mother's plan was plain enough to him now, and he saw all its advantages. But he did nothing. He never

tried to turn their talk into any special channels of his own, or to interest her in himself—though one or two little hints told him that that would be easy enough—or suggested himself again as a lame dog, an object for pity. He watched her profile as she talked, his brown eyes full of a soft, half-sad intelligence, like the look of some not very affectionate but curious animal. If she looked round at him, he would scarcely give more than a glance to those eyes he had admired so much, drooping his large eyelids slightly, yet without any air of consciousness, for Arthur was not outwardly a fool. He knew, and the knowledge worried him, that his lazy pulses were never stirred by the presence of this girl, that even his admiration at first sight was dying away, and that everybody expected him to marry her. Well they might, of course. Few men, as it seemed, could have a better fate. And a man need not be very vain to see, as he did, that she liked him; that she looked happy when he was near; that she enjoyed talking to him, and never showed any anxiety for the others to join them.

Poppy had none of the arts of a woman. She did not know how to attract people; Nature had not taught her, and education had done nothing. She was happy during that week, and she showed it quite unconsciously. In the meanwhile Captain Nugent thought the matter over, day after day, lounged after her as usual, talked little to any one else, watched her every look and movement, hardly cared to turn his eyes from her face to the most brilliant flaming glory of sunset on the Jungfrau, and decided—or almost decided—that he could not marry her.

CHAPTER XI. UNDER THE FIRS.

MRS. NUGENT and Miss Latimer, meanwhile, were growing anxious, though they did not say much, even to each other, for the subject was undoubtedly an awkward one. Otto, a practical man, was wonderfully patient. He thought he understood Arthur, and that neither hurry nor romance was to be expected, but that all would come right by-and-by. Anyhow, nothing could be more satisfactory than Porphyria's evident liking for the young man. Alice still shook her head. She also announced to Otto that she neither could nor would stay at Saint Carolus more than a few days longer.

"That will not be necessary," her hus-

band answered. "Besides, they will be shutting up the hotel."

"Very stupid of them, in such beautiful weather," said Alice. "But I'm heartily glad to hear it."

A crisis was reached on Sunday, when they had been nearly ten days at Saint Carolus. In the quiet, sleepy afternoon, when every one had disappeared, Mrs. Nugent went into Arthur's room and found him lying on his sofa at the open window, neither asleep nor reading, staring lazily out at a long white cloud which was stealing across the sky on its way to the mountains.

"Arthur, are you tired, dear?" she said.

"No, mother; only bored."

"Where is——" Mrs. Nugent began, but checked herself, not feeling sure of his humour.

But he smiled, though not quite so sweetly as usual, for his mother always amused him. Even her cautiousness in managing him was sometimes visible, and generally struck him as comic.

"Gone out for a walk," he said. "I saw her go."

Then he lay back and looked at his mother, while she, in her turn, gazed vaguely out of the window.

"Arthur," she said, after a minute, "will you be angry, darling, if I talk to you a little seriously?"

His answer startled her.

"It is exactly what I want."

Mrs. Nugent looked round for a chair. She felt herself, strong-minded woman as she was, turning hot and cold by turns. What did his tone mean? And why, if all was right, had he allowed Poppy to walk off by herself on that silent, lovely, sentimental afternoon?

"No, not here," said Arthur, slowly raising himself. "Let's go out of this awful place. You've no idea how people can hear. They sit on their balconies—there are two people now, just under the window. One can't shut it, because of being stifled. And if one does, there are people the other side of these idiotic wooden partitions. I heard them talking quite distinctly this morning—had to throw my boots about to show them I was here."

"Very well, then; we'll go out," said Mrs. Nugent, a little impatiently; and she went away to fetch her hat, for she always humoured Arthur in small matters.

What she was going to hear, she did not

know, dared not think, and his face told her nothing. But indoors or out, the less delay the better.

The mother and son left the hotel together, and walked slowly up a path that led towards the open alp above, where one or two picturesque groups of pines, starting up where rocks stood out from the soil, were the only trees to break the broad green slope that faced the mountain view.

Mrs. Nugent leaned heavily on her stick, for walking uphill was a fatigue to her, and Arthur did not offer her his arm. Neither did he speak at once to relieve her mind. What he had to say, in fact, was too awkward, and must be drawn out by questions.

"Well, dear, what is it?" said his mother softly. "What have you got to tell me? I'm listening."

"Oh—I beg your pardon," the young man said, with a shade of peevishness. "I thought you had something to say to me."

Mrs. Nugent conquered herself. She was quite capable of a sharp answer now and then, but not to Arthur. His affairs were far too important, and needed too delicate a management to be spoilt by an unconsidered word. Her influence was not to be lost in that way.

"Well," she said, "as I understood you just now, we both want the same thing. So it doesn't matter who begins. Let me speak plainly, and then say what you wish. You told me the other day how much you admired Poppy Latimer."

Arthur looked down, and chopped at the grass with his stick.

"I said she was handsome; yes," Mrs. Nugent felt herself changing colour visibly. "That's not everything, you know," Arthur went on.

"But she is a good deal more than handsome," said his mother. "And——"

"Ob, yes—very good, I'm sure. But she is uninteresting, and cares about nothing but her tenants, and is a great deal too grand and philanthropic for me. She struck me very much at first, I confess. Altogether she's fine. There are no faults to be found with her; indeed, she's too perfect. Well, the truth is, it might be rather awful to marry perfection."

Mrs. Nugent was almost too angry, too disappointed to speak, and any one but Arthur would have been made to understand her feelings very plainly. After all her plans—after all she had done for him! That he should allow such fancies to inter-

fere with the utterly satisfactory future she had arranged for him!

"She likes you," she said, rather breathlessly.

"She is very nice to me. Are we walking too fast for you, mother? Have my arm."

"No, thanks. Arthur, dear, think a little what you are doing."

He was silent for a minute or two.

"Let me tell you," he began suddenly, "it bored me awfully when I took in all these plans you have been making for me. And down there at Herzheim, when I saw her first, it seemed more natural, and as if one could alip into a thing without worrying much about it—if you understand. But up here it is so much more marked, and there's nothing to do, nothing to distract one, and I'm always wondering whether she knows what you have all got in your heads. There's a sort of persecution about it which feels like bad form. If I cared about her, I might not see it in that light—I can't say. But I don't—not the least in the world. And why should you expect me to ask a girl to marry me, if I don't care about her?"

"Because you will never have such a chance again. You like each other quite enough to be happy. Neither of you will make the other miserable. The position would be everything that is nice for you. You confess that she is very handsome, and, as time goes on, you would value her goodness more and more. Yes, Arthur, I planned it all for you, I am not ashamed to say so. But I wasn't alone. No, I am not talking of Otto and Alice. Of course they would be glad—all your family would be glad to hear of you making a really good marriage. I mean her aunt, Miss Latimer. She is devoted to her; and she wishes for this just as much as I do. Don't think that we have not considered your happiness and hers. The elders sometimes know more about that than the young people. As to her being uninteresting—I shall not contradict such nonsense as that, because you did not mean it."

Arthur, at the moment, looked rather like a naughty child, his fair brows drawn down under his cap, his eyelids drooping, his pale face expressing both anger and boredom. But his mother's last words brought the faintest shadow of a smile.

"Perhaps that was a little strong," he murmured.

"Pray, my dear, how are you going to live?" asked Mrs. Nugent. "If you go

back to India, you will die in a few years. Appointments at home, or in a climate to suit you, are most difficult to get, and you know that I have deplorably little interest. You don't care for work, your habits are expensive—I don't say you are extravagant, but you are not prudent by nature, like Otto. I suppose you mean to marry some girl without a penny! And what will become of you then? Tell me, are you in love with anybody? Please let us understand each other."

"No," he said, rather shortly. "Why on earth should I marry at all?"

"You certainly will," said his mother, and she sighed.

Climbing slowly up during this argument, they had reached one of those little scattered crests of two or three pine-trees starting from a ledge of rocky ground. The last few steps were steep, and Mrs. Nugent mounted silently, and sat down with some weariness on a bench that the hotel-keeper had placed there, raising her eyes to the mountains without seeing anything but the one dear, troublesome figure that filled her whole mind.

"Of course," she said, "we don't know what Miss Latimer would say to you, my poor boy, if you asked her."

"Exactly," said Arthur, and his voice was nearly as tired and depressed as her own. "Why should she say anything but No? The handsomer one thinks her, and the more perfect, and so on, the more worthless one becomes one's self in comparison. In fact, how could I go and say, 'Here I am, just as poor as you are rich, with absolutely nothing to offer you except——'" he shrugged his shoulders. "If there was no other objection, that makes one feel almost too degraded. I wonder you didn't see that all along."

His sulky face had relaxed a little, and he was looking at his mother with a smile to see if such an argument as this would have any effect upon her. Mrs. Nugent, also smiling, was ready with a reply, when their argument on these points was brought to a sudden end, and for ever.

A figure suddenly rose from the mossy ground on the other side of the fir-tree. Poppy Latimer, her face in a flame, her eyes shining as they had never shone before, came round the tree and stood before Mrs. Nugent. She and Arthur were both too much astonished to move, or speak, or do anything but stare at the girl as she stood there. After a moment of the most appalling silence and confusion,

Poppy, without looking at Arthur—she had not once glanced at him—sat down beside his mother, took her hand and bent her face down over it.

"I could not help it," she said, in a voice that they could hardly hear. "I could not move without your seeing me—and I came as soon as I realised—what you were saying. It concerned me."

"My dear child," murmured Mrs. Nugent, for once completely at a loss what to say or do, while through Arthur's brain there shot one thought of the escape which was impossible.

"Tell him," Poppy went on, "he must not say those things. It is I who am really worth nothing; and if I am rich, what difference can that make, except——"

The girl hid her face in both her trembling hands. She had left her hat on the other side of the tree, and for a minute Mrs. Nugent, in silence, and with a strange sweetness of perfect content in her face, sat looking down on the golden head, soft and bright, of the wild "yellow Poppy" which thus gave itself to Arthur.

"Heaven bless you, my dear," she sighed. "You don't know how happy you make me," and leaning over, she gently kissed the girl's hair.

Then she suddenly got up, took her stick, and, with the slightest sign to Arthur, set off on her way back to the hotel.

For one moment Arthur was inclined to view her departure with horror. After all he had told her, how could she do this! Was there no other way out of the most extraordinary mess he had ever been in? Her opinion was plain; there was a positive command, not to be disobeyed, in her parting glance and the slight wave of her hand which showed him his duty. Well, she had her way. The next moment he was beside Poppy, and one of her hands was a prisoner. After all he was a lucky man. She was beautiful; he was already a little in love with her as his lips touched the soft hand, and the old enchantment, the first fascination, stole over him again.

"Do you really care a little for me? I can't believe it, you know. Look up, dear—let your eyes tell me. Do you understand, Poppy," a few minutes later, "that I'm a useless, stupid, good-for-nothing fellow; that you may be spoiling your beautiful life by loving me?"

But she thought, and told him so, that her life had never before been worth living. They did not stay long under the fir-

trees, where any one might pass by. They climbed the alp and went away together into the wood, which was itself like a fairy tale, a home of romance, dark and scented and still yet musical with the trickling of a brook, and gay with shafts of yellow light, with the glow of the pine-trunks, with pink and white mosses, and scarlet wild strawberries here and there. Arthur made the best of his fate; he did not find it so hard, after all, and Poppy was in paradise.

Mrs. Nugent walked down the hill quickly and lightly, a triumphal procession of one. The expression sounds odd, but this was the effect she produced on Otto and Alice, who happened to be on their balcony, and saw her coming. She waved her stick impatiently from the slope, and Otto went out to meet her. He had never seen his mother look so happy.

"Thank Heaven, Otto," she said. "Your brother is engaged. Tell Alice she may go home to-morrow if she likes. It is all settled—miraculously, providentially."

"Now! This afternoon? By Jove! But how did it come about? We were afraid he was hardly so keen on it."

"Don't ask me! It was a miracle, a special providence, a providential fir-tree. I can tell you no more. I can think of nothing but joy and thankfulness. Dear Arthur! Silly fellow! As for that girl, she is an angel—straight from Heaven, with that lovely, silky, gold hair of hers. Thank Heaven!"

Even the questions of Alice did not succeed in drawing from Mrs. Nugent a clear account of what had happened. This was partly because, though she could not be called a religious woman, her whole mind was occupied with an almost religious aspiration of thankfulness. Another reason was that she meant nobody to know of that eminently unsatisfactory talk with Arthur, which had ended so marvellously. How near, how terribly near, Arthur had been to ruining all his prospects, and losing the treasure which was actually waiting behind that blessed tree to fall into his arms, nobody but his mother must ever know. His talk with her was safely sealed; no other ears had heard it; and how doubly providential that Poppy's had only caught the last few sentences!

Otto and Alice were almost puzzled by her excitement. After all, it seemed to them nothing very wonderful if the event

so carefully planned by everybody had come to pass. Only another instance of Mrs. Nugent's clever diplomacy crowned with success. They talked it over soberly enough when she had gone away to her own room. Her friend, Fanny Latimer, she decided, should hear the news from Poppy herself. She would not then want any of those exact particulars or explanations which might be a little difficult to give.

Sitting down to rest and to rejoice in the arm-chair by the open window, where she could watch for the lovers coming home, Mrs. Nugent lifted her eyes to the clock, and could hardly believe what she saw. It was not yet an hour since she had left her room to go to Arthur.

"Dear boy! Silly, ridiculous boy!" she murmured. "What a blessing! What a miracle!"

THE UNBIDDEN GUEST.

A STORY IN TWO CHAPTERS. CHAPTER II.

BUT to return to the ancestor. The picture, which had been submitted, frame and all, to a careful process of cleaning and renovation, proved to be a very good specimen of the art of portrait painting. It was a three-quarter length, and represented a handsome, haughty-looking man, in a suit of dark velvet adorned with embroidery and a deep collar of Venice point. Long, curling locks of fair hair fell upon his shoulders; a small moustache and imperial, both elaborately twisted, decorated his upper lip and chin; the eyes were grey and somewhat supercilious in their expression. One hand was on his sword-hilt, and upon the middle finger glistened a large emerald. In one of the lower corners was a name and date, not very easy to discern, but close attention revealed the one to be "Geoffrey Cheaney," and the other "1642."

The age of the individual depicted might be put down, roughly speaking, as twenty-five or six. Mr. Blenkinshaw hung over this restored treasure, and made as much fuss as a cat over her first batch of kittens; though he occasionally sighed as he murmured to himself, "If it had only been a Blenkinshaw!"

He discussed the question as to where it should hang till everybody was tired of it. Finally, he decided to place it above the chimney-piece in the banqueting hall.

Again the only person who did not share in the general rejoicing was Mrs. Blenkin-

shaw. She objected to the portrait hanging where it did. She said, "It made her feel as though she had no business to be there—as though they were all intruders, and liable to be ordered off the premises at any moment."

Mr. Blenkinshaw pished and pshawed, and told his son and daughter that he didn't know what had come to their mother. He really thought she ought to see some one.

"However, Geraldine, I am glad to see that you know how to appreciate such a work of art."

His daughter made no audible reply, but gazed up at the portrait with a peculiarly rapt expression. Indeed, she might now be often found so gazing up at it.

The portrait seemed to exercise a strange fascination over her.

"Why, Gerry," exclaimed her brother, one day, as he came upon her thus, "from the way in which you stand and look up at it any one would think you were in love—in love with the portrait of a fellow who must have died two hundred years ago or so," and he laughed loudly at his own wit.

She turned away with a little shiver, and her brother noticed that she was unusually pale.

"It interests me," she answered. "It interests me strangely. Do you know," she went on, "that I have succeeded in finding out something about him, about Sir Geoffrey Chesney? He fought in the Civil War—of course he was on the side of the King, and followed him to the last. He also fought at the battle of Worcester and is supposed to have met his death there, for he was never heard of afterwards, and the estate passed to his cousin Hubert, who died of the plague."

Her eyes were again fixed on the portrait, and she sighed.

"I should like to know more about him, and whether he really was killed in battle."

Her brother made a very sensible reply.

"My dear girl, what on earth does it matter the precise manner in which a man departed this life a couple of centuries ago? Bah! What a singularly mouldy smell there seems to be somewhere about here!"

It was now the end of September. The days began to draw in and grow chilly, and Mr. Blenkinshaw determined to give his grand house-warming. Most of the best people in the vicinity having by this time shown symptoms of a decidedly

friendly spirit towards the new-comers, Mr. Blenkinshaw made up his mind to send out his invitations, and provide an entertainment of the most lavish description.

He would descend to nothing lower than a fancy-dress ball. A fancy-dress ball gave one more scope, and would afford an unequalled opportunity for displaying the glories, past and present, of Chesney Hall. The dancing would, of course, take place in the banquetting hall, where the musicians' gallery would come in admirably for the band.

Rumours of the gorgeous scale on which everything was to be carried out being judiciously circulated, caused invitations to be eagerly sought and promptly accepted. After all, it was declared, the Blenkinshaws were a decided acquisition, and the question most frequently asked during the succeeding weeks was, "What are you going as?"

Mr. Blenkinshaw himself, after turning over countless prints and volumes of engravings, and alternately asking and rejecting everybody's advice on the subject, finally settled on Henry the Eighth—Bluff King Hal. He thought he could look the part, and even if the dignity were a little beyond him, he could manage the bluntness. The costume, too, would be gorgeous in the extreme, consequently he resolved to assume it with as much of the character as was procurable.

Mrs. Blenkinshaw would make a passable Katherine of Aragon, of the mild and inoffensive type, warranted not to answer back or make an undue fuss over Henry's "goings on." All the same, she didn't like the idea herself at all.

"Of course it must be as your papa wishes," she remarked to her daughter, "but I can't bear the notion of representing a person who was beheaded. It doesn't seem to me altogether respectable."

"But, mamma," said Geraldine, "Katherine of Aragon was not beheaded!"

Mrs. Blenkinshaw shook her head mildly, but firmly.

"Of course, dear, you ought to know. You learnt all the extras at boarding school—algebra and calisthenics, and all sorts of things ending in 'ology'; but for all that I think you must be mistaken. If I remember rightly, Henry the Eighth cut off the heads of all his wives and hung them up in a row. And then there was something about a key and——"

"You're not thinking of Bluebeard, are

you, mamma? because it sounds rather like it. At any rate, Henry the Eighth did not behead Katherine of Aragon; he only divorced her."

"My dear Geraldine, that's even worse! Perhaps you're right about Bluebeard—and I'm sure your school bills were heavy enough—but whatever can your papa be thinking about? I wish he'd never taken it into his head to give this fancy-dress ball. We never gave one all the time we were at Streatham."

Geraldine Blenkinshaw did her utmost to assure her parent of Katherine of Aragon's entire respectability, but with small success.

"You can't get over the fact that she was divorced, my dear, and though some people may have visited her afterwards, there must have been a good deal of awkwardness, and I have no doubt she was dropped by the best families—like Mrs. Asteriak, who used to live in our terrace, and gave herself out to be a widow, but was really only separated from her husband because of a tiresome way he had of pinching her black and blue so that she couldn't wear a low-necked dress when she went to a party."

Her daughter, finding it impossible to restore Katherine's damaged reputation in her mother's opinion, wisely withdrew from the argument, and devoted her attention to her own costume. She was to represent Shakespeare's most romantic heroine, in white satin and pearls, and made such a charming Juliet that she could hardly fail to find a Romeo on the forthcoming festal night.

Arthur Blenkinshaw, for some reason of his own, insisted on making a mystery of his proposed impersonation, much to his sister's vexation.

"I call it very shabby of you, Arthur, to keep your choice a secret. I've shown you my dress, and yet you won't even give me a hint as to your own."

The young man chuckled.

"I mean to give you a little surprise. I've got an awfully good idea, and you'd never guess what it is. Wait till the night comes."

The night did come—at least, the day came first. It was fine, but cold.

Every hour brought some fresh arrival from town—van-loads of flowers from Covent Garden, cart-loads of refreshments from Gunter's, mountains of ice, rivers of champagne, and, later on, a small army of waiters.

Early in the day Mr. Blenkinshaw gave orders for a fire to be lighted in the great fireplace in the hall.

"Traditions were all very well," he said, "and he was willing to humour them to a reasonable extent, but it wouldn't do for people to be standing about shivering before the dancing began."

So betimes in the morning a fire was laid and lighted, Mr. Blenkinshaw personally superintending the proceedings. It gave a feeble puff or two and went out.

"Try again," said Mr. Blenkinshaw cheerfully.

They did try again, and yet again; in fact, they tried at intervals all day, with the result that at every attempt a cold gust seemed to come down the chimney, extinguishing the flames, and leaving behind a damp, earthy smell, which became stronger each time. Piles of wood and dozens of boxes of matches were employed in vain. Each attempt only resulted in failure more complete than the last.

Mr. Blenkinshaw fumed and fidgeted, and almost danced with rage. He anathematised everybody and everything, and even went so far as to shake his fist in the face of the Family Portrait.

"Confound you, sir!" he cried, "you needn't sneer down at me in that fashion, for I won't stand it. What business is it of yours, I should like to know? Never mind, I won't give in. I won't be beaten by a mere tradition. I'll have the whole chimney pulled down and set to rights before I'm a week older. And as for you, sir, I'll send you back to your garret where you were before. We'll see who'll be master here, and——"

Geraldine Blenkinshaw, who was standing by, interposed at this point.

"Oh, father, don't talk like that, please," and she gazed beseechingly up at the portrait, as though imploring pardon for her parent's outburst; Mrs. Blenkinshaw—also present—clasped her hands and sighed forth the magic word, "Streatham"; Arthur Blenkinshaw, who had strolled in and stood with his hands in his pockets watching the progress of affairs, said, "What a duffer you are, Gerry;" and the Family Portrait looked down upon the scene with the same set, supercilious smile, as though despising them all.

So there was nothing to be done but clear away the embers and leave the hearth cold.

The first person to put in an appearance

in costume that night was Mrs. Blenkinshaw, habited in the robes appertaining to the first spouse of the "Bluff one."

Mr. Blenkinshaw followed quickly after. He was gorgeous in the extreme; it was impossible to look at him without winking, and he did his best to assume that air of majesty which was the only property the costumier could not undertake to supply. He found Katherine of Aragon standing by the chimney-piece in a listening attitude.

"Hush!" she said as he came up.

"What on earth's the matter now, Emma?" he asked testily, that other affair having left its marks upon his temper.

"Don't you hear it?" she asked in a whisper.

"Hear what?" he repeated, still more irritably; for his costume, though gorgeous, was far from comfortable, combining as it did a sense of tightness about the arm-holes with one of coldness about the legs.

"A scratching sound," she answered, "as though made with the point of some sharp instrument, which seems to come from the chimney. Listen! There it is again."

"Hang it all, Emma!" exclaimed Mr. Blenkinshaw; "there's no end to your fancies. A scratching sound, indeed! Of course it's a mouse or a rat nibbling in the wainscoting. Whatever else could it be? Do for goodness' sake—Ah, here's Arthur. Why? What? Bless me! Can I believe my eyes?"

These exclamations were caused by the appearance of his son and heir attired in a Cavalier costume of dark velvet embroidered with gold. Round his neck was a falling collar of rare old lace, on his head a long flaxen wig which, with the addition of a false moustache and imperial, made a remarkable change in his appearance. He was the Family Portrait come to life.

His sister, when she first caught sight of him, turned pale and uttered a scream.

"Oh, Arthur," she cried, "whatever induced you to do it? I don't like it. It seems like mockery."

"Don't be a duffer, Gerry," was the fraternal response. "Mockery, indeed! I think I'm paying the fellow a jolly good compliment. Imitation, you know, is the sincerest flattery; isn't it, old chap?" and he looked up at the Portrait, which—or else it was the effect of the light—appeared to frown down upon him.

But the guests began to arrive. Innumerable candles shed their soft light

upon the representatives of almost every age and country. The hall was filled with the buzz of voices, and with the perfume of the choice exotics which occupied every available inch of space. From the quaint old musicians' gallery over the entrance came the sound of the tuning of instruments. All—at least on the surface—was gaiety and glitter; and yet, for all that, several of the more sensitive of the guests found themselves shivering and wondering where that cold air came from, and what was the source of that strange, damp, earthy odour which at times overpowered even the enervating perfume of hothouse flowers.

Still, as the evening wore on, what with the exhilarating strains of the fine band, to say nothing of the rare wines and sumptuous viands, such trifling drawbacks were forgotten or overlooked. Mr. Blenkinshaw, senior, as he contemplated the rich and varied throng, and realised how many of the very best people he had gathered together under his—or rather some one else's ancestral roof—felt his heart swell within him; and as he led out the Dowager Lady Beaumonde, he forgot the discomfort of his velvet shoes and experienced that sensation known as "treading upon air." In point of magnificence, no other costume could compete with his own, and as he caught sight of his portly and imposing form in a mirror, it seemed impossible to imagine that he was personally the inferior of any one present in birth or station, and the idea occurred to him that if the Blenkinshaws had not come over with the Conqueror, it was merely because they had missed the boat.

"Whose is the portrait over the chimney-piece?" asked a lady of her partner.

"One of the old Chesneys, I fancy. Don't you see the son of the house is got up to imitate him? See, there he is, coming this way."

A figure in dark velvet, with long, fair love-locks falling over a collar of old yellow lace, passed close by them and disappeared in the throng.

The lady gave a slight shiver.

"Is that young Blenkinshaw? I should never have known him. What an exceedingly haughty-looking young man! One would never take him to be the son of his father. Dear me, what a draughty place this is! I feel as though some one were walking over my grave!"

Apropos of the individual just referred to, the feeling of superlative satisfaction

enjoyed by the host was not shared by his son. Mr. Blenkinshaw, junior, as the evening wore on, was conscious of a strong feeling of annoyance.

It was, to say the least, exasperating, after having taken so much trouble over his costume and personal appearance so as to ensure as exact a resemblance as possible to the portrait of Sir Geoffrey Chesney, to find that some one else had had the — the impertinence to copy it even more exactly, and take upon himself precisely the same rôle as he had chosen.

It was in an interval between the dances, early in the evening, that the matter was first brought to his attention. He was taking a surreptitious inspection of himself in a glass in one of the smaller rooms on the ground floor, which were all thrown open for the occasion. He and his late partner were, for the moment, the sole occupiers of the apartment, and as he leant one arm on the mantelpiece, and twirled the ends of his fair moustache with a killing air, and one eye on his reflection, he fancied he heard a laugh, a faint sneering laugh, and some one passed the open doorway, some one who appeared to be his very double. He started up uttering some excuse and made hurriedly for the door, but there appeared to be no one at hand at all corresponding with the figure of which he had caught but a passing glimpse, and he returned to his fair companion in an exceedingly bad temper.

"It was beastly bad taste—and in a fellow's own house, too!"

Later on he caught sight of the individual again; indeed, he had been looking for him ever since, though ineffectually.

Yes, there was no doubt about it. The fellow, whoever he was, had taken him off completely. Yet how on earth had he managed to do it when he had kept his choice, and the details of his costume, a complete secret even from his own sister? What disgusted him still more was the fact that he didn't know the man in the least; at any rate, not in his present disguise.

He mentioned the matter to his father. "Do you know who the fellow is who has copied my dress? There he is, standing close to Geraldine. I don't seem to know him a bit, and what's more, I don't half like his looks. I suppose no one would venture to come here without an invitation, though I know they do try that sort of thing on in London."

Mr. Blenkinshaw looked in the direction indicated.

"No," he said, "I don't know who it is. In fact, I don't think I've noticed him before. Perhaps he came with some one else. How very pale your sister looks!"

Arthur muttered something about "confounded cheek, and he'd a good mind to ask him for his name," and turned away.

Just then his mother approached him. She wore a look of anxious perplexity, and the hand she laid on his arm trembled.

"Arthur," she said, in a low, frightened voice, "of course you've noticed it?"

"Noticed what, mater?"

She shook her head, thereby running the risk of seriously disarranging her elaborate headgear.

"It's all very well for your father to pooh-pooh it, and say it's only the draught. I only wish I could think so myself," and she sighed ominously.

"What are you talking about, mater?" enquired her son, his attention wandering, and his eyes still seeking the stranger.

"If it were only one or two," continued his mother mysteriously, "I shouldn't think so much of it; though it would be bad enough. But when it comes to every single one, who could help taking it as a warning?"

"Hang it all, mater," was the rather irritable response, "you might give a fellow a clue to what you're talking about!"

"My dear Arthur," she exclaimed in an agitated whisper, "is it possible you haven't noticed that there are winding-sheets on all the candles?"

"Gammon!" was the only remark vouchsafed by the disrespectful young man as he quitted his mother and drew near to where his sister was standing by the great hearth, on which the fire had been lighted in vain.

The stranger in the Cavalier costume, though he did not appear to be addressing her, stood close by, immediately under the portrait to which he bore such a remarkable resemblance. His left hand rested upon a carved projection of the oak chimney-piece, and Arthur Blenkinshaw noticed with a sudden sensation of surprise that on the middle finger of this hand a large emerald flashed green fire.

He stared at the man, and the man returned the look with one supercilious to the point of insult.

"Geraldine," he said, and stopped. There was something about his sister which distracted his attention. She was looking very handsome, but deadly pale,

and there was something about her that her brother described to himself as uncanny. "Geraldine," he began again, "will you—— Why, he's gone!"

Two or three people, attracted by the sudden sharp exclamation, turned round and looked enquiring.

"I tell you," cried the now excited young man, "that he was standing here a moment ago, and now—where is he?"

A little crowd began to form round the hearth, while the young fellow with increasing excitement, which many, it is to be feared, attributed to champagne, repeated his words.

"He was standing just here," he cried, "with one hand pressed against this, and—— Ah, what was that?"

Involuntarily he had struck the wood-work a sharp blow. There was a rumbling, grating sound, and the portrait over the chimney-piece swayed forward.

"The Priest's Hole!" cried one of the elder guests, pushing forward, and pointing to a long narrow crevice which was now visible above. "The hiding-place that was suspected to exist but never discovered!"

At the same moment a strange, vault-like atmosphere seemed to diffuse itself throughout the hall, and Geraldine Blenkinshaw fell fainting on the floor.

In a moment all was tumult and confusion. Henry the Eighth, bewildered and distracted by the extraordinary turn of affairs, found himself elbowed most unceremoniously.

The girl was borne away to be tended elsewhere. Arthur Blenkinshaw, with his face almost as colourless as his sister's, still kept his hand upon the portion of carving. He pressed it, and it yielded slowly, while the rumbling noise continued, and the crevice widened. At length a square opening was discovered above their heads. Meanwhile the crowd increased every second as tidings of some extraordinary discovery were passed from mouth to mouth.

"A ladder!" cried the same guest. "We must have a ladder. Who knows what we may discover there—perhaps treasure! Perhaps——"

A short ladder was brought and placed in position. Arthur Blenkinshaw was the first to ascend it. He disappeared through the aperture, to reappear almost instantly to call for a light, which was handed to him. Passing through the opening, he found himself in a small cell-like chamber about seven feet by five, containing a rough table and stool—nothing more.

Nothing more? What was that? Not the figure of a man crouched in the corner? He raised the light above his head.

In a second the—whatever it was—had collapsed, leaving nothing but a heap of dust upon the floor.

The fancy-dress ball at Chesney Hall broke up in confusion. In the course of the next day it was known throughout the neighbourhood that there had been a ghastly discovery of human remains, and also that Geraldine Blenkinshaw was ill with brain-fever. When the matter came to be investigated it was found that the walls of the hiding-place were scored with marks which seemed to have been made with the point of some sharp weapon. A series of dots and scratches having attracted attention, were found on minute investigation to point to something even worse than was at first suspected.

On being deciphered they were made to bear the following interpretation:

"I, Geoffrey Chesney, being att the pointe of deth, doe call downe Heaven's malisone upon my most foule and trayterous cousin, Hubert Chesney, in that havinge lente his ayde to concele me from the crop-eared naves that ware hard upon my heels in this secrete chamber, of wh^{ch} the sprynge opes butt from without, hee has afterward abbandonnee mee to a most crewell and lingering deth, hopeing thereby to come into——"

Here the marks ended abruptly, to recommence in another place:

"Maye his name bee blotted out, and his hearthe bee ever colde."

There is nothing more to state, except that among the poor handfuls of dust, which were all that remained of the unfortunate victim, there were discovered a ring set with a large emerald, and a rusty dagger with a broken point.

Chesney Hall is again in the market. The Blenkinshaws have returned to Streat-ham, where Mr. Blenkinshaw has built him a mansion wherein everything is of the newest and most modern style possible. They have never given a fancy-dress ball since, and Geraldine Blenkinshaw, in spite of her good looks, shows every symptom of dying an old maid.

HOUSE-HUNTING.

THE prophet says, "Fools build houses and wise men live in them." As a tenant under the usual three years' agreement,

modesty forbids me to venture any remark on the latter portion of the text. With respect to the first statement—well, probably the prophet was a fifty-pound householder, trying to fit his old carpets into a new house. It is a difficult thing, even with the aid of a few MS. notes, to carry in your head the dimensions of some eight or ten carpets “all too good to be cut up.” But when you have also to apportion them over each of ten houses in the course of a day, with no more accurate measure than an umbrella, you are ready to join the prophet in any denunciation which seems at all applicable.

But this is but a minor misery of the house-hunter. From the very moment he enters the suburban agent's door, to that last blessed hour when he leaves it with the lease in his pocket, he is beset on every side with trials. To begin with, there is that snare, the suburban house-agent's catalogue, neatly bound and profusely illustrated. Who is the great anonymous novelist that writes these books? I say The writer, for these fascinating works are always written in the same style, and one can trace the same powerful hand in each. Why does he not doff his anonymity, and take his place among the great masters of fiction of the century? It would be presumptuous to attempt to criticise, but there are some passages which are endeared to all of us by old and hallowed association, and for which we eagerly search the local agent's catalogue, whether we are house-hunting in north, south, west, or even east. Who does not remember that “charming villa containing nine rooms”—including the kitchen, scullery, and six-foot bedroom; that imposing “double-fronted residence”—a picture is shown—which has a livery stable within three yards of the back windows—picture not shown—that “unusually large garden” which altogether fails to make up for the fact of an utterly unsanitary house?

How these old favourites crop up again and again! How each shows itself to the best advantage as they lie grouped round the railway station! I never have come across a house which was more than ten minutes from the station—that is, in the course of my reading. Actual experience has made me think that perhaps here, as in other cases, this great author idealises!

One of the most prominent features in the suburban “Estate Office” is the large baize key-board, which usually hangs

within convenient reach of the counter. For some time I was unable to understand on what principle it is worked. When, after a long study of one of the fascinating works above mentioned, the house-hunter decides that he would like to look over a certain house, the clerk affably asks, “What number, please?” He replies, say, “Number 1728.” The clerk refers to a large book, a sort of “édition de luxe” of the printed catalogue, and reads “1728, Roseville House; landlord, hum-hum-um. Key at this office;” or “Key at Number 21 opposite.”

Blessed is the man whose sentence is “Key at Number 21 opposite.” 'Tis true that he will not find the key there, yet he will probably obtain reliable information as to how he can get into the house through one of the back windows. But if the verdict is “Key at this office,” woe to him! The clerk reaches to the board and takes down a rusty key ticketed 1728. Seizing it, the eager hunter walks off; but the first glance at the keyhole shows that that key never could and never did belong to that door. “Try the back.” The key, which would not enter the front keyhole, buries itself to the hilt in the back door in a vain endeavour to reach the lock. The unfortunate man is lucky if he ever gets into that house. The only chance is to go steadily through the keys on that green board. The clerk will assist him with a cheerful catholicity; but, even with his help, the chances are about two to one against his getting into the house.

My belief is, that this board of keys is part of the original stock-in-trade of the agent, and that they are numbered at the commencement of his career with a sublime disregard of what houses shall be catalogued to the various numbers. Next time I go house-hunting, I shall first buy a job lot of old keys myself. It will save trouble and profanity.

When finally you do get into a house, the vagaries of the suburban builder will give you no chance of further thought as to your difficulties in gaining an entrance. You see that the apparently aimless obstacles which the agent puts in your way have a purpose. He lets you down gently. If you got in easily, the temptation to leave directly would be too great. But he knows that, hardly won as is your entrance, you will not rashly leave, even when confronted by the naked hideousness of the builder's conceptions. As far as possible the suburban builder avoids lay-

ing stress on the kitchen. He knows gentility is wanted, he feels that a kitchen is not genteel, and therefore suppresses it sternly. If by accident or want of foresight he makes a kitchen of a decent size, he promptly discounts it by lowering the ceiling, so that the gas-brackets swing below the chin. But when a house has a red-brick facing and stained-glass panels to the front door, no one can expect much in the kitchen way.

After all, there is nothing like the absolute abhorrence for hot water which the builder shows. Certainly of late years the force of public opinion has moved him somewhat, and it is possible and even probable to find a hot-water system in those new "fifty pound Queen Annes," which line the sad and dreary new roads of a London suburb. But take the old or middle-aged house; the house with six steps and stucco pillars, which has large folding-doors between the two "reception rooms." You look over it hopefully—"Good solid walls; none of your jerry-built houses; comfortable rooms, etc." You enquire, "Bathroom?" "Oh yes;" and the caretaker, with legitimate pride, shows you a transmogrified linen-cupboard, six feet by six, without a window, containing a forlorn bath—Roman, I fancy, is the technical name. But hot water? Oh dear, no! The landlord has exhausted himself in the way of improvements by turning that cupboard into a bathroom. "He might put in a geyser," remarks the caretaker, with that self-denying desire to let the house which all caretakers so curiously have. I know those geysers! Considering our builders and our landlords, it is a wonderful thing that the nation has ever obtained, and still continues to keep, a justly famous name for the morning tub.

The "fifty pound Queen Anne," with all its semi-solidified state, its raw garden, its situation on the brink of a ploughed field, is the best stand-by of the house-hunter. He may, with a modified rapture, rejoice in all of its modern improvements but one. It is no pleasant thing to stand outside a house for ten minutes, in a bleak north-easter; but that is what generally happens if you put your faith in that deceitful little black knob, the outward and visible sign of an electric bell. Be warned in time; flee from the electric bell. It will destroy your peace of mind, alienate your friends, and make your life miserable in every way. Better the wigwam of the savage than the most ornate

modern dwelling into which this pest has crept.

It is not simply that it does not act; that could be got over. It is intermittent. In bitter irony it strikes, but not as a bell strikes. Like the British workman, it strikes at the most inconvenient moment.

Let your rich aunt call with a legacy beaming in her eye. The bell marks her from afar, and when she arrives on the doorstep she may push and push at its snub nose, but not a sound will it emit. Finally, after banging the door with her umbrella, she is admitted in such a condition that no apology can appease her. Within the next half-hour the rate-collector calls, and at his first touch the bell responds with a shrill, malignant voice.

If, when you are taking your bath on a particularly "fresh" morning, you find that there are no towels, the bell will not help you. You may shiver in a way that would melt the heart of a funeral bell; but the electric bell has no heart. It mocks you. The honest old English pull-bell, when it broke down, acknowledged failure by hanging its head; but this smug-faced hypocrite responds to your thumb with alacrity, though fully conscious that there is no answering tinkle below. Three years in a house fitted with this abomination will take a corresponding three years off your life. The caretaker always makes a great point of its advantages, and the bell, with fiendish ingenuity, appears very docile to his touch. "His touch," I said, but, when one comes to think of it, it is usually the female caretaker who officiates. The male caretaker, it is a curious fact, sleeps in the day. The female caretaker, baby in arms, always shows you round the house, and you always have to peep in a deprecatory sort of way into one—usually the best—bedroom, as "there his my 'usband asleep, hif you please, sir." The only male caretaker I ever saw was in his shirt-sleeves, and, I believe, had risen when I rang the bell. The fact is, that caretakers belong as a rule to the class of night workers, such as policemen, signalmen, burglars, and the like.

The most extraordinary trait of the caretakers is their real desire to let the house they are living in. One would think that the prospect of turning out of a comfortable villa would make them point out the defects, which are usually many. But no! with chivalrous zeal they point to all the beauties of the scenery round; and leaning

their back against a suspiciously damp patch on the wall, dilate on the "roomy landing" on which you are standing. And so all through. The kitchen range, which afterwards possibly plays you any amount of tricks, is the most beautiful the female caretaker has ever used. The conservatory, in the end too draughty for your hardiest plants, the male caretaker assures you has been the means of his obtaining numerous prizes at the local flower show. Of all the mysteries of those strange people, the caretakers, nothing is so mysterious as their mendacious fidelity to their master.

There is no doubt that the real way to go house-hunting is to do it by deputy. It saves trouble and wear and tear of soul and boots. Besides, there is the inestimable advantage of having some one to revile over the inevitable defects which are found in a new house only after taking possession. My brother-in-law first put me up to this—that is, to house-hunting for him. He is none of your "fifty-pound house holders," but a regular top-weight—two hundred and fifty pounder, without his stables.

He came down to my office, and pointed out to me that he must have a larger house; but that he did not want his name known in connection with his search. He convinced me, at the time, that this was very wise on his part, but now I believe his sole motive was to get me to do it for him, which convinces me still more of his wisdom!

In any case, I could not disoblige so influential and wealthy a relative, and I agreed to look over a few places quietly for him. Besides, there was a certain consequence in inspecting such mansions as he selected, "with a view to taking them."

So taking his list and his umbrella—he said he knew the size of his carpets better in umbrellas than in feet—I sallied forth, and disturbed people at all imaginable times. I upset nursery teas and kitchen dinners; I appeared at one house in the middle of a fashionable "at home," and was ushered into the dining-room and had a cup of tea and a caviare sandwich before I could explain my errand. I tried to measure a school-room under the eyes of a severe governess and six young ladies. I was treated in some places like a duke; in others like a labour agitator. In some houses the lady or gentleman would show me round; in others the gardener; and in one case I was put in charge of a nurse-maid and two children, who asked me, on

leaving, for pennies. And so I should have gone on till this day, for my brother-in-law could not make up his mind, and when he could my sister wouldn't. However, at last he gave me an opening to withdraw, and I took it. Not content with the houses ostensibly to let, he wanted me to go to the house of a mutual friend, and look over it without revealing my purpose. I believe he had a vague idea of making the man some tempting offer for it if it should prove suitable, which I knew it wouldn't. "Just measure the drawing-room with this," he said, flourishing his umbrella. I pointed out to him that it would be a very difficult thing to explain, if I was caught standing on a chair probing the ceiling with an umbrella. He seemed rather hurt at my suggesting that it would be difficult to frame a reasonable request to be allowed to inspect the bedrooms. Anyway, I refused to go, and I was never again asked to look over a house on his behalf. I think he sends a clerk now—two hundred and fifty pound householders can do that sort of thing.

THE VINTAGE OF THE MEDOC.

THE best clarets are grown in the district called the Médoc, which is divided into the Haut Médoc and the Bas Médoc, and again subdivided into localities such as Pauillac, Margaux, St. Julien, and St. Estèphe. These names are applied to the growths of the respective localities—and to a good deal besides.

The Médoc is a long tongue of land which stretches north from Bordeaux between the sea and the rivers Garonne and Gironde. The name is believed to be derived from the Latin words "medio aquæ," because this tongue is very nearly surrounded by water. It forms the northern extremity of that area of sand-hills and marshlands comprehensively called Les Landes, and to the peculiarity of its soil it owes some of the most valuable vineyards in the world. Yet it is not what can be called fertile soil, being of a light pebbly character, and it is noticeable that the best wine is produced where the earth appears the most sterile, and in fact little better than stone-heaps.

The vine flourishes best where the soil is too thin even to encourage weeds, and where the bushes are stunted. The reason is that in such places the earth retains the sun-heat long after sundown,

so that the work of fructification proceeds almost as steadily by night as by day. The surface of the Médoc is composed of sand and pebbles supposed to have been washed down by the mountain-torrents from the Pyrenees, and deposited ages ago on the sea margin.

At what period in history the vine was introduced into France is somewhat uncertain. Pliny says that Helicon, the Helvetian, brought the vine from Rome into Gaul, but Plutarch says that the Gauls obtained the vine themselves when they invaded Italy in the third century before Christ. Other historians credit the Phœnicians with the gift, and others say that the culture of the grape was first learned through the ordinary channels of commerce. Once introduced, it is certain that it rapidly thrived and extended in all directions, so much so that in the time of the Roman invasion it was regarded with, doubtless pretended, fear, as likely to cause a famine by taking the place which ought to be occupied by corn. But often as the lands of Gallia have been devastated, the vine has never ceased to thrive, and nowhere better than in the district of the Médoc.

It is not a healthy district, for notwithstanding its stony soil and its altitude above the Garonne, it is full of marshes and stagnant pools. For this reason its numerous costly châteaux are occupied only for a short time each year during the vintage season. The resident population of peasantry and labourers is, nevertheless, considerable, each vineyard having a group of cottages for the accommodation of those permanently required for the industry.

The vine is cultivated in open fields, unprotected by walls and hedges, and a vineyard is by no means a picturesque object. The vine is trained along horizontal laths, attached to posts from one to two feet high, in long continuous lines with the best exposure to the sun. Four times a year the plough is drawn between the lines to turn over the soil, and the plough is drawn by oxen whose steady tread offers no injury to the plants.

After five years the vine begins to yield, and the older it is, the better is the wine produced from its grapes. Some of the vines in the Médoc are said to be over two hundred years old. It is only when the grapes begin to ripen that any protection is provided. The worst enemies, curiously enough, are the dogs, which are very destructive, and to keep off whom temporary furze fences are

placed round the vines. For protection from birds and thieves, watchers with guns are posted day and night.

By the end of September the grapes should be ready for the vintage, and then the Médoc awakens from its lethargy and resounds from end to end with bustle and song. Then it is that the châteaux fill up with the proprietors of the vineyards and their friends, and that the peasants pour in from the surrounding country for employment in the harvest.

The vineyards are alive from morn to eve with men, women, and children, divided into gangs, each under a foreman who is responsible for the ingathering of a dozen or so of rows of vines. His charge is to see that the people stick to their work, that they cut no unripe grapes, and leave no ripe ones on the vines, that they leave none on the ground, and put no leaves or refuse into the baskets. The women and children do the picking, and with almost mechanical precision reject all decayed specimens. At every row is a cutter who cuts the bunches and places the fruit in a basket; to him comes regularly a man to take away the basket as it is filled, and to empty it into a headless cask; when this cask is filled it is drawn by oxen to the cellars.

The pay of the vintagers is good—about a franc and a half a day per man, and half that per woman and child, in addition to their food. The work lasts for two or three weeks, and it is a merry time while it lasts, songs and music filling the air both in the vineyards and at the presses.

When the casks filled with the rich ripe fruit reach the cellars—long stone buildings without floors—they are emptied on to a horizontal lattice-work table. On this the grapes are rubbed by a skilled workman in such a manner that the fruit drops through into a trough beneath, while the stalks remain to be thrown away. Treatment differs, but following the most general process the grapes which fall through the lattice-work are received in a trough which is on a slightly inclined plane, with a groove to permit the juice to run freely off into a receiver. Upon the bottom of this trough the fruit is spread evenly, and then three or four men with bare legs and feet begin to tread down the grapes, dancing to the sound of a fiddle as long as the grapes continue to be thrown in.

This is wine-treading, and although machines have been often introduced to supersede it, and are, in fact, used in some

vineyards, the belief remains that a virtue exists in the human feet which no mere mechanical pressure can provide. This may seem odd, but it is readily explainable. The weight of the human body in rhythmic dance is quite sufficient to crush the grapes, while the human foot is sufficiently flexible not to crush the seeds, which contain an oil injurious to the wine.

It is held by some growers that crushing produces a more rapid and equable fermentation of the juice, although a lighter-coloured wine. Others maintain that it produces too much sediment, and that it is better to throw the unbroken grapes into the vat, and allow them to exude their juice in a natural process of fermentation. That process takes about a fortnight, by which time the skins and seeds will have settled to the bottom of the vat. When the grapes are trodden it is only the juice which runs into the vat; but after the men are done dancing upon them, the skins and pulp are put into a mechanical press, where the remaining juice is squeezed out of them, and made into inferior wines.

Whether it be the whole grape or the trodden juice which is put into the vats—huge oaken vessels standing in a row in the sheds—these are hermetically sealed, with, perhaps, a siphon to carry off the carbonic acid gas that may be generated. Two weeks is the usual time allowed in the vats, but the period varies, and may extend to four weeks.

When fermentation is completed the liquor is run off into sixty-gallon casks, the contents of each vat being distributed over the casks, so that each cask receives a due proportion of the contents of each vat, and none receives all the top, all the middle, or all the bottom of a vat.

We have spoken as if the grapes were always separated from the stalks before being trodden, or placed in the vats, but as a matter of fact this is not an invariable practice. Some authorities maintain that the stalks should not be separated—at any rate, when the grapes are over-sweet and require the addition of tannic acid to give strength and colour to the wine, or when it is desirable to lengthen the period of fermentation. A saccharometer determines the approximate quantity of sugar in the "must," and enables the wine-maker to decide whether to remove the stalks or retain them, or even—as in some rare cases—to add a little sugar.

We will pass over the chemical process of fermentation, and come to the next

industrial process in wine-making. This is the barrelling and bottling.

The barrels must be of the best oak and the best make, for a bad barrel will spoil the best wine that was ever made. They have to be very carefully cleaned out, first with boiling water, and then with brandy, after which they are fumigated by means of a bit of lighted sulphur at the end of a rod run through the bung-hole. When thoroughly purified they are put in a row upon thick beams to protect them from the damp floor. After being filled with the new wine, they have to be constantly watched by the cellarman, who gauges regularly the evaporation, and replaces the exact quantity evaporated. This refilling is very frequent at first, but after a few months once a fortnight suffices. The bungs also have to be carefully watched, and the linen round them constantly changed, since any acid which the cloth absorbs may be imparted to the wine.

By the month of March the first "racking," or drawing off, of the new wine is done. That is to say, the wine is led off by a siphon from the first cask to a new one, which has been as carefully cleansed and purified as the first. The siphon is used so that the wine may not come into contact with the air. The process is repeated in June and again in October, and each drawing off should be clearer than its predecessor. When the clarifying is not proceeding as it should, from any cause, some makers throw the whites of half-a-dozen eggs into the cask, others use gelatin, or some other clarifier, but nothing which can in any way injure the quality or colour of the wine.

Sometimes, if the fermentation in the vats has been imperfect, a second fermentation will take place in the casks, the symptom of which will be the blowing out of the bung by the generation of carbonic acid gas. When this happens, the wine is promptly drawn off and passed through pipes immersed in boiling water to another barrel. This danger is incidental only to the first year. Second fermentation rarely occurs in the second year; but in the second year the wine is racked off three times again.

At the end of the third year the wine is ready for bottling, for it will not mature any more in wood after that term. Some wines mature much earlier. The bottling process is simple, but very great care has to be exercised with the corks, which are soaked in brandy before being forced

by an ingenious machine into the necks of the bottles. The bottles are then sealed or capped, and laid on their sides in the cellar, either to mature there, or to be presently packed into cases and shipped abroad. This is with regard to wines "bottled at the château," but of course the larger proportion of the claret consumed in this country is imported in wood and bottled here.

A vintage does not always turn out as well as is expected and predicted at the time of bottling. Sometimes a wine which promised well fails to mature its virtues in bottle, and sometimes a wine of which not much was expected develops great qualities.

The most abundant crops have not, as a rule, produced the most famous vintages, but the year 1875 produced the largest crop ever yielded in the Médoc, and no better wine has been made since. The year 1868 was also one of an exceptionally abundant crop, but the wine of that year is not classified higher than "fair." The next year, 1869, yielded the largest crop till then known, and the wine has continued to improve in quality, until what remains of it now commands a high price. In 1870 the quantity was moderate, and the quality good. In 1871, again, the crop was the smallest known for years, but the wine was of remarkable excellence. Then again, in 1873, the crop was still smaller, and the quality poor; while in 1874 there was a tremendous vintage of splendid wine, which now commands the highest price in the market.

To sum up later vintages, 1876 was a small crop and poor quality; 1877 was a fair crop and inferior quality; 1878 was the smallest crop since 1873, but the wine was excellent, some of it as good as 1875; 1879 was a moderate crop of ordinary quality; 1880 was a small crop which promised well in quality, but went worse; 1881 was a light crop of very good quality; 1882 was a still smaller crop of very inferior quality; 1883 was a large crop of poor quality; 1884 was largely spoiled by mildew, and few of the wines came up to average quality. Since 1884 the crops have been small, but the quality has been fair to good, and that of 1887 especially is ranked as high as the vintage of 1875.

In the Médoc, of course, it is only red wine which is produced. The Sauterne district is where the white wine is made, and there the vintage is much later than

in the Médoc. There the grapes are not gathered until thoroughly sun-ripened. They are trodden with the feet as soon as they are picked, and the fermentation takes place in the barrels, which are kept constantly full. The process takes about a month, when racking-off begins. Much racking is needed before the wine becomes sufficiently clear for first quality. Each vineyard usually makes three grades of wine at each vintage—"Crème de tête" from the choicest and most carefully selected grapes; "vin de tête" from the next picking, and "Centre" from the remainder of the crop.

In the Médoc the vineyards are themselves classified according to merit, and very capricious is Nature in distributing her favours. It is curious to remark how a few paces only may separate the birth-place of priceless wines and that of nameless "claret." The several "crus," or vineyards, are thus classified by the wine experts of Bordeaux in order of merit:

First crus: Château-Lafitte, Pauillac; Château-Margaux, Margaux; Château-Latour, Pauillac; Château-Haut-Brion.

Second crus: Mouton, Pauillac; Rauzan-Ségla, Margaux; Rauzan-Gassies; Léoville-Lascases, St. Julien; Léoville-Poyféré; Léoville-Barton; Durfort-Vivens; Lascombes; Gruaud-Larose-Sarg, St. Julien; Gruaud-Larose, St. Julien; Braune-Cantenac; Pichon-Longueville, Pauillac; Pichon-Longueville-Lalande; Ducru-Beaucailou, St. Julien; Cos-Destournel, St. Estèphe; Montrose.

Third crus: Kirwan, Cantenac; Château-d'Issan; Lagrange, St. Julien; Langoa; Château-Giscours, Labarde; Malescot-Saint-Exupéry, Margaux; Cantenac-Bronn, Cantenac; Palmer; La Lagune, Ludon; Desmirail, Margaux; Calon-Segur, St. Estèphe; Ferrière, Margaux; Marquis d'Alesme Becker.

Fourth crus: Saint-Pierre, St. Julien; Branaire-Duluc; Talbot; Duhart-Milon; Poujet, Cantenac; La-Tour-Carnet; Rochet, St. Estèphe; Château-Beychevelle, St. Julien; La Priouré, Cantenac; Marquis de Therme, Margaux.

Fifth crus: Pontet-Canet, Pauillac; Batailley; Grand-Puy-Lacoste; Ducasse-Grand-Puy; Lynch-Bages; Lynch-Mousses; Dauzac-Labarde; Mouton d'Armailhacq; Le Tertre, Arsac; Haut-Bages, Pauillac; Pédesclant; Belgrave, St. Laurent; Camensac; Cos-Labory, St. Estèphe; Clero-Milon, Pauillac; Croizet-Bages; Cantemerle, Macau.

This is the classification of the Château wines adopted by the Bordeaux Chamber of Wine Brokers in 1885, and considered to be a thoroughly just one. All the wines of these crus are good—for some palates those of the last two or three classes may be preferable to the first two—but the quality of the vintage, as we have seen, varies from year to year. Age is no test of value in the wines of the Médoc—or at least is not a sufficient test—unless the vintage was a good one. A large vineyard will produce as much as eight hundred casks of wine at each full vintage, but numbers of the small growers are content with even fifty casks as their year's work. The price varies greatly with the reputation of the Château and the quality of the vintage. The wines of the first crus, for instance, will sell for fifty pounds per hogshead, or more, as soon as they are made, and the other growths run downwards according to merit and the state of the market.

What, then, is Claret? It is a general name applied to all red wines imported from France, and to others which resemble them, imported from other countries—as Spanish, Portuguese, Australian, etc., clarets. The word itself is taken from the French—*Vin Clair*et, or clarified wine—but nowadays the larger portion of the wine drunk under the name of French claret is not the product of French grapes.

A few figures will show this. In the vineyards of France the production of wine has fallen off within the last twenty years by about two-thirds, in consequence of the ravages of the phylloxera, and other diseases. In 1875 the vintage yielded over seventy-eight millions of hectolitres of wine, but of late years the yield has averaged only about twenty-five millions. The area under vines is now about one-fourth less than it was even in 1880. On the other hand the importations of foreign wine into France—principally from Spain, Algeria, and Italy—have, since 1878, grown from half-a-million hectolitres to ten and a half million hectolitres, that is to say to nearly half the extent of the French crop.

Again, while the vintage has decreased two-thirds, the exports have fallen off only one-third. How is this? Because the ten and a half million hectolitres of imported wines are blended with the "*petits vins*" of the French vineyards, which contain too little alcohol of their own to be fit to export. These thin wines are manipulated in some skilful way to acquire a perfume, and are

then mixed with, say, strong Spanish wines to bring them up to the required strength. The result is not altogether unpalatable, and possibly is wholesome enough; but it is not *Vin de Médoc*.

The manufacturing, blending, and maturing of wines is an enormous industry, but it is conducted for the most part in the cellars of the merchants of Bordeaux, and is altogether separated from what has been the object of this article to describe—the vintaging of the Médoc. It should be said that the owners of the château-vineyards, whose names are often misappropriated by the mixers, are very strongly opposed to the manipulation of foreign wines, now so common in France, and if they had their way, would put on such prohibitive tariff-duties as would stop the trade. Naturally they wish to preserve the reputations and sustain the values of their vintages, but the world apparently cannot get on without cheap "*claret*," and the clever French makers have proved themselves capable of producing all that is wanted, even when the Médoc is prostrate with black rot and mildew.

Never mind if your shilling pint of "*St. Julien*" never saw *St. Julien* in its life—it is *Vin Clair*et all the same, and is not less wholesome for having been grown under an African or a Spanish sun. Of course, there are some cheap "*clarets*" which are not mingled grape juice, but vile chemical concoctions. Of such abominations we have nothing to say, but that to avoid them one has only to deal with a respectable wine merchant, who derives his supplies from shippers of credit and repute.

So great has the industry of wine-making become in France, apart from the vineyards, that a project is in contemplation by some French capitalists to acquire large tracts of land in California, where the vine flourishes, and to grow wines there for shipment home to France for manufacture and re-export!

THE LATE MRS. VERNON.

By A. MOBERLY.

Author of "*Lady Valeria*," etc., etc.

CHAPTER V.

DR. WALSHAM and Nurse Magrath were agreed for once in their lives as to the mischief done by Colonel Fortescue's visit. It had thrown my recovery back for days,

so I was assured. I think they were wrong. Some ill effects in the shape of exhaustion and a slight access of fever followed it certainly; but, mentally and morally, it roused and braced me as nothing else could have done. I was alive again, thinking and planning for myself, conscious, so it seemed to me, for the first time in my life, that I had a self worth living and planning for.

The clasp of those strong, brown fingers still thrilled warm through mine. The dark, kindly glance, resting on me with its look of chivalrous tenderness, had filled me with a cheering sense of comradeship, of hope and courage to meet the task that lay before me.

Then the truth, and the shame of it, stung me to the soul. The words, the touch, the look were not for me, but for the dead woman whom I was robbing of her name and her place in the world.

Why had not Colonel Fortescue found me out to be an impostor at once? Was there such a strong likeness between me and my unfortunate fellow-traveller as to deceive an old friend?

The glass stood so that by leaning forward I could see my reflection, and I surveyed myself critically on the spot. I remembered her cream-white complexion—mine was blancher now to somewhat the same tint; our hair and height were the same—but the eyes? Mine were certainly dark like hers, and had the same thick curling lashes, now I came to look at them; but the expression was as utterly different as was my straight mouth and square chin from her soft rosebud lips and dimples. I recalled her pathetic little liftings of her eyebrows and the pretty pout of her baby lips, and fancied how they would suit my commonplace features. My face involuntarily assumed the appealing, petteish, childish expression with a result so comic that I broke into a laugh, and the face in the glass laughed back at me for the first time in my memory. Then the bare thought of nurse catching me practising simpers at my mirror made me blush all over in still more unfamiliar fashion, and I dropped back in my chair abashed and confused.

It was the matron who broke in on my solitude.

"More enquiries after you, Mrs. Vernon," she said pleasantly; "a lady visitor this time."

I started nervously. Colonel Fortescue's anxiety that my presence there should be

kept secret had impressed me uncomfortably.

"I cannot see her. Don't let her come."

"She need not. You are not the Mrs. Vernon she wants. She is quite an uneducated person in search of a missing friend of your name. It was merely a coincidence that you should be travelling on the same date. Her Mrs. Vernon is an elderly lady coming from the north of Ireland."

"I have no friends in England—none, none, except Colonel Fortescue. He is the only person I can see. If anybody else comes pretending to know me, please—please keep them away," I begged urgently.

The matron raised her fine eyebrows slightly, but promised, and I tried to feel reassured.

No one else came, and I began steadily to set about arranging a statement of my case to lay before Colonel Fortescue on his next visit.

Nurse, under protest and with many a caution, had procured me a note-book and pencil, and I spent the long quiet hours in my great chair by the window writing down with painful care all that I could recollect of Mrs. Vernon and the details of our meeting; stopping languidly now and then to watch the yellow leaves of my plane-tree swirling softly to earth. As to my own identity it seemed at first as if I could find any number of witnesses to prove it; but when I came to make a note of them they dwindled down to an unsatisfactory half-dozen. My own story of my early days would be disposed of by Dr. Walsham as a fiction, the invention of a diseased imagination. If I insisted on being Miss Margison, what more natural than for me to invent the whole of Miss Margison's story!—so he would say, or I fancied so. And how could I contradict him? Aunt Hitty could not help me. Her friends wrote that she had failed rapidly since the death of her faithful Metty, and was fast becoming childish. None of the people about her had any personal knowledge of me. My old schoolmistress had passed from my ken—dead likewise, most probably. The Tarrants were half-way to the Marquesas by this time. The charwoman, the few tradespeople I had dealt with in our different places of abode, two or three officers at the camp with whom on rare occasions I might have interchanged a word, the old gentleman to whom I gave up the house, these were absolutely all I

could count upon. Could they swear to me—to my face—my voice? My face had changed, the glass insisted on that. I must wait for my hair to grow, and the delicate, exotic look to wear off my complexion. As to my voice, they had heard it so seldom they might be forgiven for not recognising it. I could depend on no one! Unless—— If Colonel Fortescue elected to believe Dr. Walsham rather than me—if he refused to hear me out, and I could quite imagine him doing so; why, then there was one last desperate chance left me. I would appeal to Mr. Tom Vernon! He must know his wife, and I would dare him to look me in the face and claim me.

Suppose he did! Suppose for some purpose of his own it was needful for him to silence or remove me.

I grew so faint and sick at the thought that Nurse Magrath coming bustling in with my dinner, began to reproach herself vigorously with having been ten minutes later than usual in bringing it up.

Nurse Magrath was full of her own affairs just then. Dr. Millar had bought a practice, and there was some talk of marriage at Christmas. Her time was up at the hospital, but as they were short-handed she had consented to stay on for a few weeks longer. A doubtful boon to the patients, I should say. She went about smiling absently to herself, making the most appalling blunders, her pretty blue eyes dreamily fixed on the future, her soul absorbed in the decision between the rival merits of a white-paint-and-spindle-legged Queen Anne drawing-room or something Japanese, all bamboo and chrysanthemums.

"Nurse, do you remember my being brought in here? How was I dressed?"

"Dressed? Little at all of that you were. Your black gown was in ribbons, torn in dragging you out of the smash, and your underclothes soaked with blood and mud. You were badly cut about your arms and shoulders, but you mended before you knew anything about that. Everything had to be cut off you; there wasn't a rag worth keeping except your shoes and your fur cloak. Somebody found that lying near you and wrapped you in it, and a lady lent you her rug."

"H hadn't I a pocket?"

"To be sure you had. It's in the drawer over there, safe enough. You have the key."

Nurse unlocked and pulled out the

drawer, which she placed on a chair beside me. It contained the trinkets they had taken off me and a few other things. The pocket was rolled up at the back. It was an old-fashioned stout linen one which I used to wear when travelling—unmarked, unfortunately. I had made it in haste before leaving the Tarrants. It still held my purse, containing literally all my worldly wealth, the savings of seven years, which I had drawn out of the Post Office, also the cash for the last cheque. My smaller purse, in which I carried my loose change, must have been in my dress pocket or my bag, and was lost for ever. Then I came upon Mrs. Vernon's russia-leather pocket-book. I looked into it. English notes for forty-five pounds, a slip of paper with the departures of the trains from Paris neatly written down, and some French silver—that was all. Had I lost the bundle of papers which she entrusted to me, or had I dreamt them? No, there they were in the drawer, and beneath them a small object on which I pounced with a cry of delight. How could I have forgotten it! My own little old pocket Bible. It had been Aunt Hitty's, and perhaps her mother's before her, and she had given it to me when her eyes grew too feeble to read the small print. Its red leather covers were rounded at the corners with years of wear, and the yellow blank pages at each end covered with faint handwriting in ink brown with age, the register of births and marriages of generations of Howarths and Margisons, down to the wedding of "Richard Margison and his first cousin, Elizabeth Howarth," and my own ill-starred birth the year after. Here was a proof, clear and certain. I tried it on nurse forthwith.

"Look here, nurse. Look at this Bible. Do you see the name in it?"

Nurse gazed at it amiably and uninterestedly for a moment.

"Elizabeth Margison! Who's that? Ah, the poor creature that was killed. I suppose it was picked up and shoved in amongst your things in the confusion." She turned it over and over thoughtfully, as if working out some problem, then looked up at me suddenly and eagerly, her eyes sparkling with some new idea. "I've been puzzling and puzzling, and I do believe I see it now!" she cried. "That ruche, you know—it's just Liberty silk cut on the cross and frayed out, and then——"

I dropped back in my chair discouraged,

and told her she might replace the drawer and leave me. I should want nothing more. She only waited to borrow the bodice of an evening dress, and danced away beaming.

I looked at the papers on my lap unhopefully. I was to read them and take them to a lawyer, I remembered, so languidly I unfastened the ribbon round them and commenced to examine them indifferently.

A little bundle of notes and bills apparently, rolled inside some folded newspapers. I took up the innermost papers. They were a collection of shop and hotel bills, neatly pinned together. One was headed with the name of an hotel at Southampton; the items were supper, beds, breakfast, and luncheon for two, with extras—bedroom fire, bath, chocolate. Then came a draper's bill for a dressing-gown, some cambric handkerchiefs, and a travelling rug; another for eau-de-cologne, sal volatile, and hairpins, both from Southampton shops, and one stamped with the same date as the hotel bill. Then followed a very lengthy account from an hotel in Guernsey, and on the back of this was noted, in a neat foreign hand, some other items—railway and steamboat tickets, cabs, fruit, and porters. At the bottom, in the same hand, "Received, Josephine Simon," and on an extra slip of paper, pinned like a wrapper round the whole, "An account of money expended by me, Josephine Simon, for my mistress, Mrs. Vernon, on the eighth of November and during the following week. Very important."

I could make nothing of it. Of two other scraps of paper, one had been crumpled up and straightened out again, its edges were scorched, and some wood ashes shook out of it; both were undated and unsigned, on common note-paper, and in the writing of an uneducated woman.

"Madam," the first began, "as a true though unknown friend I write to warn you of the awful consequences of your rash action. All the county is against you for leaving your husband and your dear little child, who is safe now in the care of her aunt and her excellent nurse. As for you, you need never show your face here again. Keep away, it will be safest for you, and keep F. E. with you if you don't want murder to be done when he and your husband meet."

On a blank space at the end I read :

"Four or five similar notes were received by Mrs. Vernon in the course of the following month, but were unfortunately destroyed by her in justifiable indignation."
"J. S."

The second ran :

"MADAM,—Your husband is trying for a divorce. Let him get it. Don't you be induced to interfere. I tell you this for your good. He's going about like a madman, swearing to spoil that pretty face of yours if ever he gets the chance. He's a man of his word. Let him get rid of you, and he'll forget all that has happened, and you can marry F. E. respectably."

"You don't want to be made to come to England and be put in a witness-box, do you? Keep away quiet and safe, and let things take their chance. Your humble but true friend."

The newspapers might give me a key to this curious story. There were two London daily papers and a Society journal. This, having the earliest date, I opened first. A marked column was folded outwards.

"An exciting romance of county society reached its dénouement on Wednesday last at the Llantwyth Hunt Ball. We for obvious reasons refrain from doing more than sketch the outline at present, but we promise our readers the full and most piquant details in our next number. It is an open secret that the cause of the absence of a certain young and beautiful lady patroness was not unconnected with the mysterious disappearance of one of the gentlemen acting as stewards from the scene of festivity. There is a story of a note delivered by an unknown hand; of a carriage ordered in haste from the 'Vernon Arms'; of a veiled lady and her maid being found in waiting at a certain gate on the London road. We are in possession of full particulars."

The London papers contained the sequel. Two vicious black dashes were scored against a column headed "Law Intelligence"; underneath, "Probate, Divorce, and Admiralty Division"; and lower still, "Vernon v. Vernon and Espinal."

I had so far identified myself with the name that the sight made me start and shrink, and it was with a conscious, half-guilty feeling that I read on.

The case was evidently one of importance, from the number of counsel

engaged in it, and the length at which it was reported.

An eminent Q.C. made the opening speech for the petitioner, Mr. Thomas St. Clair Vernon, of Llantwyth Castle—Colonel Fortescue's "Tom Vernon"—who had married about five years previously Léonie, only child of Mr. Edward Freeling, a wealthy West Indian merchant. It was a marriage of affection, so the learned counsel declared. He would not disguise the fact that there had been some trifling dissensions caused by money matters after the death of Mr. Freeling, but he was prepared to show that the union was a perfectly happy one till the appearance at Llantwyth of the co-respondent, Francis Espinal, son of an old friend of Mrs. Vernon's father.

Divorce cases were strange reading to me. Months and years had passed without my opening a newspaper while I was with the Tarrants. The Major saw the papers at the mess, and his wife never read anything but *Madame Somebody's* weekly journal of dress and fashion. I was as ignorant as a child of the world and its sorrowful ways, and as the story went on I dropped the sheet, and covering my hot cheeks with my hands, wondered what woman, innocent or guilty, could stand such an inquisition and live.

Her servants, the guests she had welcomed under her roof, the neighbours she had lived amongst as friends, all called up in long array, each with his small atom of mud in readiness to cast on her fair fame. Every action of hers—foolish enough, many of them, I could well believe—watched and commented on by a regiment of household spies, who jested and tattled in the servants' hall about her walks with Mr. Espinal in the rose garden, her long twilight rides with him through the country lanes, the gifts he was supposed to send her, the constant notes passing to and fro through the maid's untrustworthy hands. Mr. Espinal had established himself in the neighbourhood, and had made no secret of his admiration for the lady, and his undisguised contempt for her husband. He had been heard to threaten him on more than one occasion. Mr. Vernon went in terror of him, so Miss Honor Vernon swore.

She was Mr. Vernon's sister, and the real head of the household at Llantwyth Castle, and the greater part of the second day was taken up with her evidence. She gave it with spiteful readiness; I could

picture her as I read, a sour, domineering shrew—and I believe I only did her justice; yet through all the spite against her beautiful, foolish sister-in-law, which embittered every sentence, I was struck with the note of absolute honesty. She took care that her evidence should be not only the truth, but the whole truth, and her admissions under cross-examination were appalling. If his wife had been bad, extravagant, and unfaithful, not a rag of Mr. Vernon's character as a husband or a gentleman remained to him when his sister left the witness-box.

With that the second scene of the pitiful tragi-comedy closed, leaving the large and fashionable audience on the tip-toe of suspense, while the court adjourned for a week to allow for enquiries to be made after a certain Fanny Burridge, Mrs. Vernon's maid, an important witness, who for some reason had not appeared when summoned.

There the story ended for me. No other paper was enclosed. My first impulse was to ask nurse to get me a file of the "*Times*" of the date. I was sure it could be had for money. Then I thought of the explanations involved, of Colonel Fortescue's wish for secrecy. He must help me, then. Always Colonel Fortescue—ah me! This was the woman he took me for! My cheeks flamed with vicarious shame; I sprang from my chair and paced the room impatiently, eager to start out into the world again, and by my own self, and for my own sake, to set about the righting of this story of grievous wrong.

My courage was short-lived. Faintness and fever followed, and a night of suffering through which, as I stared blankly into the darkness, there rose again and again before my eyes a vision of Mrs. Vernon's silly, sweet, innocent face, and her childish voice asked again: "Do I look as if I had been very wicked?" "No, no!" I cried, half aloud, "I'll not believe it—or I'll hear your side first, at any rate!"

When was I to have the chance? Colonel Fortescue gave no sign. Day after day slipped by and brought neither letter nor message. Flowers were sent, but with no name attached, only a business-like direction with the florist's address thereon. I wondered at first, then grew sick with disappointment. The sense of an unfulfilled duty began to oppress me. I examined and re-examined the papers to see what I could gather for myself, and by

degrees and dimly some light began to dawn on me. I began to imagine a possible defence, to perceive how little much of the evidence really amounted to, and to notice how much that was hearsay had to be repressed.

My brief acquaintance with Mrs. Vernon enabled me to understand how, between a hot-headed, reckless lover and a cruel, cowardly husband, she was bound to compromise herself and make the very worst of the situation. Miss Vernon's sharp tongue had cut two ways, and showed that, whether sinning or not, she was sinned against sorely. I put the papers away carefully, wondering what the anonymous letters could mean, and why Josephine thought them and the bills "most important." Who was she? Josephine! The name came back to me in a flash of recollection. It was she who had instigated and arranged Mrs. Vernon's fatal journey home—Josephine, who had married the courier so inopportunistly. Of course; some one in charge of the poor, hapless little woman who had directed her comings and goings just as I should have found myself doing. Where was she now? If I could but have known where Mrs. Vernon had travelled from! Perhaps I might discover the hotel at which she had stayed in Paris. Might there be any mark or label on the boxes? I examined them closely. One was large and English made, the other a tall grey French article. No maker's name within or without, and every vestige of luggage label carefully cleaned away by the conscientious hospital scrubber. Kitty and I had gone over the contents pretty thoroughly. Chiffons and ornaments in plenty, but no letters or papers, not even a book. A bonnet and a hat had the address of two different French milliners inside; but that was all.

Would Colonel Fortescue never come? I should soon be well enough to leave the hospital, and perhaps lose sight of him for ever. Perhaps that was what he intended. Perhaps by some unimagined way he had guessed the truth, and was designedly

avoiding me. He would be sorry for me; he would take the gentlest way of letting me see that my deception was discovered. He would give me a chance of laying down my borrowed identity and slipping back to life as Elizabeth Margison once more.

"Sitting in the dark!" exclaimed Kitty, bustling in fresh and rosy from her hour's exercise. "Why would you not let them light up? And crying! Yes, I see the tear-marks on your pillow. And your tea all cold and horrid! I'll make you some fresh in a jiffy."

Nurse bustled about and made up the fire, then ministered unto me with fresh tea and toast, chattering briskly the while.

"Oh, I wish you had been with me. It was delightful out! People are all beginning to come back to town again. And the winter things in the shop windows are lovely." She discoursed at length for a few minutes anent fur-trimmed costumes and the proper position of an aigrette; and I let my thoughts wander. "So I took a 'bus to the Stores," she was saying when I recalled them. "Who do you think I saw? I was going up to the Boots, you know, in the lift, and he was going up to the Guns and Portmanteaux, so we both went on to the Refreshments and had some coffee and cakes. He said he knew me directly; but it might have been the uniform. He wanted to know how you were, and said I was to tell you he had a reason for not coming again to the hospital; and then he asked when you were going out, and I said in a week or two; and then he asked where you meant to stay, and I said I didn't know; and then he said might he recommend some rooms. He would see after them and write to me if they were to be had, and I said he might. We had quite a nice long talk. He had never quite understood how ill you had been, or how horrid old Walsham was——"

"Kitty, do stop. Who are you talking about?"

"Why, haven't I been telling you all this time? Colonel Fortescue, to be sure."

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MISS LATIMER OF BRYANS.

By ELEANOR C. PRICE.

Author of "Alexia," "Red Towers," "The Little One," etc.

CHAPTER XII. THE RECTOR.

TWO days afterwards the news of the engagement reached the Rector of Bryans. He was Poppy's godfather, her one remaining trustee, and her old friend, though he had only held the living about five years, having been presented to it by her father not long before his death.

A very short letter from Poppy was enclosed in a very long one from her aunt, full of confidences and explanations.

"MY DEAR MR. CANTILLON,—Aunt Fanny has told you my news. I hope you will not be sorry. You ought to be glad. Please send me your congratulations.

"Your ever affectionate

"PORPHYRIA LATIMER."

The Rector's breakfast lay waiting on the table while he read both letters more than once through. Then he went through the curtained doorway into his study, and sat down at the writing-table—that ideal writing-table which was the abode of all his inspirations. His hand shook a little as he wrote:

"MY DEAR PORPHYRIA,—I send you my blessing. My congratulations are all for Captain Nugent.

"Your affectionate old friend,

"HENRY CANTILLON."

He went back into the dining-room, sat down, sighed, poured out his coffee with his usual anxious carefulness. It was already a little cold. He felt injured, and reflected that an engagement is a convul-

sion of nature, causing waves of disorder and confusion in the atmosphere affected by it. But apart from this result, he hardly knew whether to be pleased or displeased. The Nugents were not the kind of people he much liked. He had seen something of Otto as a young man at Oxford, where his own life had been spent till he came to Bryans, and had taken no fancy to him. He distrusted Mrs. Nugent, for several reasons, as cordially as a man of his simple and generous mind could distrust anybody. Of Arthur he knew nothing but his name, and had thought of him, if at all, as a nonentity; most certainly never as a worthy or even a possible husband for Porphyria Latimer, whose stately old name, suggested by him to her father and mother, seemed to invest her with a kind of imperial majesty. Even without it, she would have had dignity enough in her own character, and in her position at Bryans; but the Rector had an imagination.

This imagination of his had seldom moved more quickly than on that morning, when the consequences of her engagement came thronging each other into his mind.

At first he had been astonished, vexed, almost dismayed. He moralised, making a little face over his coffee, on the mistakes made by women, especially in their friendships. A long and affectionate intimacy with Fanny Latimer did not blind him to her weaknesses, and through all the excuses and explanations in her letter he saw that this was an arrangement made by friendship—made by Mrs. Nugent with Fanny as an active and faithful ally. Very likely there was no harm in the young man; very true that money was not a necessity to Poppy's husband. But Mr. Cantillon could not be quite recon-

ciled to the thought of her marrying a Nugent—and a failure. She was happy; he thought he understood that. It was her first experience, and her nature was far too fine to realise defects in any one who was devoted to her.

"Look at Maggie Farrant," thought the Rector. "She will never understand the inferiority of that girl. And, Fanny, knowing this, what exquisite care you should have taken! Not that I blame you so much as your friend. It was her interest, of course; and if ever there lived a woman who would gain her objects, even unscrupulously, that woman is Mrs. Nugent."

The Rector leaned back in his chair, and glanced again through Miss Latimer's letter, which he had kept beside him through a short and unsatisfactory breakfast. As he read it his brow lightened a little, and a dreamy smile dawned in his pleasant grey eyes.

"After all, it may turn out well," he began to think. "He may be a nice fellow. And then, it's an ill wind that blows nobody good. Now, perhaps——"

He pushed his chair back suddenly, got up and went into the study, carrying the letters with him. A gleam of sun, for his house faced a little east of the south, fell on one of the bookcases that lined the low walls. He glanced anxiously at his books, and pulled the blind down. Never were books so considered as these. They were chiefly modern and well bound, and Mr. Cantillon's touch was so careful and delicate, that when he had read a book twice through it looked as if he had just brought it home new. In the study there was nothing but books; the one only picture stood on the writing-table, in a very handsome brass frame of classical design. It was a photograph, smiling, happy, beautifully dressed, of Miss Fanny Latimer.

Why these two had not married years ago, nobody could tell. Perhaps neither he nor she had ever been quite enough in earnest to give up separate lives of liberty and comfortable independence, he among his books and his friends at Oxford; she in her charming little house at Bath, in the midst of old china, artistic furniture, and tea-parties. Then he had always been more sure of his own feelings than of hers, and he was not the kind of man to risk a refusal.

However, when her brother, his oldest friend, offered him the rich living of

Bryans, become vacant by the death of an old man who had been there fifty years, Henry Cantillon felt that such an offer could not be refused. The late Rector had been an old bachelor, too, and a miser. He had let the Rectory to some people who could not be turned out of it, and had lived for years in a very original house made of several cottages thrown together. Mr. Cantillon added to this and improved it, till there was nothing prettier or more comfortable to be seen for miles round. His four gables of beautiful yellow stone, half overgrown with creepers and ivy, smiled down on that part of the village street which climbed towards the Court gates. He furnished his house with a careful taste which was all his own, even provoking the laughter of the Squire with his dainty arrangements.

"Cantillon's going to be married," he said to his wife. "See if he isn't. He'll spring some Oxford lady upon us one of these days. I only hope to Heaven she won't be blue."

Mrs. Latimer, who saw and knew more than her husband, smiled a little sadly. She suspected that the new Rector had a thought and a hope in his mind, and that this had been a strong agent in persuading him to give up his happy college life and accept Bryans, a large parish though a rich living, with plenty of work for a conscientious man—unfamiliar, uncongenial at first to a man like him. Whether Fanny Latimer would have consented to come back under these conditions to her old home, nobody ever knew. A year and a half passed before Mr. Cantillon was ready to ask her. Then, in a bitterly cold winter, an attack of bronchitis carried away Mrs. Latimer, always a delicate woman, from her husband and from her very childlike, inexperienced daughter of eighteen. Fanny Latimer at once gave up her house in Bath and came to live at the Court. Henry Cantillon could not then find it in his heart to suggest her leaving his old friend in his sorrow. He must wait, he thought. After a time Latimer would recover his spirits, always excellent, and be like himself again. Porphyria would be grown up, and her father, who worshipped her, would find her companionship enough for him. Then, when his sister seemed really free, her old lover's time might come. It would be only waiting a year—at most a year. The pretty paper in the drawing-room would not have time to fade.

But before that year was out the Squire, formerly so strong and cheerful, had followed his wife into the shadow. It seemed as if he

for one day tried
To live without her, liked it not, and died.

Then, and ever since, all Fanny Latimer's thoughts, energies, affections, were given solely and entirely to her niece and her niece's affairs; and the Rector, being one of the trustees, and helping her to his utmost in bearing this new load of anxious responsibility, felt that his own hopes must once more—this time probably for ever—be locked up in that drawer of his writing-table where he carefully put her photograph to sleep every night, wrapped in a large sheet of tissue paper.

Thus it was no wonder if, after all, he could not find it in his heart to blame Miss Latimer very severely for letting her niece become engaged to Arthur Nugent. He spent nearly the whole morning writing to her, with frequent glances at her charming picture, and with a smile not seldom broadening his thin and delicate features. Only the sun interrupted him, shining persistently in, that bright September day, and making a new arrangement of the blinds constantly necessary.

After luncheon, his letter being finished, he went out into the garden to think things over there. A long panelled passage, hung with old prints, led down to the garden door, which opened on a small lawn set round with rose-trees. An arch of roses led from this to a broad gravel walk, running a long way perfectly straight between borders brilliant with flowers of every varying colour and scent. These borders were bounded all their length by long low trellises, over which climbed roses again, clematis, honeysuckle of different kinds, and other beautiful clinging plants. The vegetables, with paths and borders of their own, were discreetly hidden behind these green and flowery fences; here, too, were strawberry-beds and currant-bushes. Stone walls, the outer boundary of the long garden on each side, were loaded with every kind of fruit. At the end were greenhouses, one thickly hung with grapes. Between them the wall was much lower, and from this point the garden had its view without much distance or variety, but pleasing to Mr. Cantillon, who did not care much for things that were vague and vast. A bright green meadow sloped straight down from his garden wall to the quiet stream which ran along the hollow

between lines of silvery willows, and was crossed by a foot-bridge just opposite. From this the slope of a further meadow climbed sharply. Then came the upper road of the village, which was divided into two parts by the stream. This road was not in itself visible from the Rector's garden, but could be traced by a line of cottage roofs, mostly thatched, and the grey walls of old gardens, and the beech and elm-trees, now beginning to change colour, which were grouped here and there along the line of it. They grew taller and thicker on its farther side, and there the grey tower and long roof of the church stood out amongst them.

To the right, this upper road wound on past a farm shaded by two old cedars, its yard full of great corn-stacks, and then was lost behind village roofs at the corner where it divided, going on into the open country, or turning down that populous part of the village where the school and a few little shops were, crossing the river by a low-walled stone bridge, and joining the road from the station, some distance below the Rector's front door.

To the left, the upper road made a sharp turn away from river and village, which was quite invisible from the Rector's point of view, being hidden by the walls, and roofs, and large trees of a house—the old Rectory, in fact—which stood up there at the corner. Beyond this, as it seemed, there was nothing but woods. Only when the leaves were off could one see the chimneys and part of the broad front of Bryans Court, standing high above church and scattered village, meadows and shaded stream.

There was never a weed to be seen in the Rector's garden. Anything of this sort would have too much disturbed the even sequence of pleasant and scholarly thoughts which came to him in the hours that he spent walking up and down there. And he loved his flowers, especially just now the deep red clove carnations and the great purple and silver clematis. It made him happy to stand and gaze at them in the soft sunshine, which they, it was so evident, enjoyed equally. Once an old woman in the village shook her head at Mr. Cantillon and said, "Ah, you make a god of your garden!" With regard to that special old woman, his conscience did not accuse him, and it was like him to make peace with her, a day or two afterwards, by means of a large bunch of his loveliest roses.

Even to-day, when his mind was full of this great news for Bryans, and when Miss Latimer's letter had laid upon him the rather troublesome duty of making it known, it was a temptation to linger in the garden through that calm and sunny afternoon, to think the whole matter over again with the help of his flowers, which always—another temptation—had their own little claims on his attention. Dead blossoms and leaves to be cut off, a long tendrill of creeper gone astray, a tall carnation asking to be tied up, more effectually: these things could not very well be neglected. The Rector attended to them that afternoon with even extra care; but in the background of his mind there was all the time an uncomfortable consciousness that nothing became easier by being put off, and that it might be better, after all, to obey Fanny's orders, to "tell everybody, especially Mrs. Arch, the Farrants, and the Thornes," than to sentimentalise over Fanny herself in the garden.

And it was not very long before this impression became too strong for him, so that, having stuck a red carnation in his buttonhole, he went back into the house to fetch his tall hat and his stick, without which he never appeared in the village; and then, passing down the garden again, opened his little wicket-gate, and walked at a quick pace down the path to the bridge, on his way to the upper road.

Mrs. Arch was the housekeeper at the Court, and Mr. Cantillon thought that she might come second on the list, while Maggie Farrant and her grandfather, for every reason, ought to be put first. Personally, he was not very fond of either of them; but he had watched with interest the growth of Poppy Latimer's friendship with the girl, and quite believed in the girl's affection for her. The old man was rough and strange, but no intelligent person could fail to be struck with him, and he, too, had spoken of Poppy in terms which pleased the Rector. He almost seemed to understand that his granddaughter owed her everything.

"Church Corner," as it had been called for many years past—indeed, ever since the old Rector had let it to his equally eccentric old friend, and had made a dwelling for himself on the other side of the water—was by no means an attractive house at first sight. Its rugged stone walls stood flush with the road, and the one or two lower windows which looked

that way were protected by heavy iron bars. The door was studded with great nails, and rather suggested a fortress or a prison than the peaceable dwelling of one old man and his grand-daughter. There were other ways into these forbidding precincts; a garden door, opening on the river meadow, which was not always locked, now that old Mr. Farrant could not go round himself with his bunch of keys; and two or three cunningly devised steps in a corner of the garden wall, on the other side, leading over into a quiet little lane which connected itself by a woodland path with the Court avenue. This was the way used chiefly by Poppy and her friend for coming and going to each other. Then a garden door and a farm road from the Court opened into the road a little way above, and were useful in bad weather. The tall gates of Mr. Farrant's stable-yard, which was uninhabited by horses, were as carefully barred and locked as the front door.

Mr. Cantillon was far too scrupulous and careful in his manners to make use of either of the garden ways without express permission from old Mr. Farrant. It was of no use for Maggie to assure him that her grandfather would be sorry to think of his walking round by the road. The old man himself said nothing, and the Rector continued to come by the road, and to ring at the fortress-like front door.

Generally Maggie knew his ring, opened the door herself, and took him along the passage into her own little sitting-room, with its French window opening into a small garden on the east. The room was dark by nature, and also dismal, in spite of attempted high art decoration—or perhaps because of it, for Maggie's ideas on the subject were all borrowed, and her friend Miss Latimer had none to give her. A few good books were her only contribution to the room where the two girls often sat, and talked, and read together. In Mr. Cantillon's eyes they hardly redeemed the room. He also disliked the little garden, and tried to sit with his back to the window, in order to escape the sight of a certain rockery, which was the pride of Maggie's heart.

To-day a servant opened the door, and he was not shown into the drawing-room, as they called it, but was taken in another direction, up a few steps, to the one room which sometimes made him regret this old Rectory. It was a beautiful room, looking south, with a polished oak floor and

panelled walls, nearly all hidden by the bookcases. The sun poured in almost too brilliantly at the large, recessed oriel window, though tempered in the upper part by coloured panes. A cushioned oak seat ran round the window, except on one side, where a door had been made to open on a flight of stone steps, leading down into the garden. Another deep recess at the eastern end of the room held a large old-fashioned fireplace, with a row of shining brass candlesticks, as in some old kitchen, on its high dark mantel. They flashed and sparkled in the leaping flames. There was always a large copper kettle on the hob, and close beside the fire stood two carved arm-chairs with red cushions, very high and very old. In the one with its face to the window old Mr. Farrant was generally to be found sitting. His long white beard, too ragged to be beautiful, strayed over shabby old black clothes; the look of his thin, high features was something like an ancient bird of prey. "He never makes me feel comfortable," the Rector used to say. "I wish he wasn't a clergyman. And the state of his books is an absolute calamity."

Poor old books! Hundreds of volumes of them, battered and torn and worn with every kind of ill-usage; some with half their bindings gone, some lying loosely about, never bound at all. In his early acquaintance with them, the Rector had tried to pull one out now and then, to smooth its leaves and put it straight with its companions. He had picked up scattered volumes from the floor, having stumbled over them, and tenderly flicked off the dust. But this kind of thing generally produced a laugh or an acid remark from the old man by the fire, and by degrees the Rector had to confess that the state of Mr. Farrant's library was beyond his curing. Still, as he sat in the other arm-chair, his eyes would wander constantly over the walls, suspecting buried treasures, priceless first editions in those long files of dingy leather. But he had no encouragement to search for these, and he was too courteous to do without it.

On this sunny September afternoon, the room when he entered it was in such a glory of light that at first, coming out of the dark passage, he could see nothing. He caught the gleam of Mr. Farrant's white beard in his usual corner, and was aware of the flicker of his perpetual fire. Then he saw Maggie sitting in the window, her head thrown back against a high-

backed chair, in what struck him as an unnatural attitude, though he thought at the same moment that the girl had never looked prettier. Then he became aware of a young man in the shadow close to him, drawing carefully on a small board. Anything in the way of art attracted Mr. Cantillon instantly. Without having the faintest idea who the artist was, he looked over his shoulder, pausing an instant on his way towards the fireplace.

"Capital! Excellent!" he said at once. "Only the position is not quite right, is it?"

The artist looked up with a pleased smile in his dark, eager eyes, then pushed back his chair and stood away from his sketch that it might be better seen, staring at it himself with a kind of anxious enthusiasm.

"Mr. Cantillon," growled the grandfather from his corner, "what do you think of my room being turned into a drawing shop?"

Maggie, meanwhile, had sprung from her chair and come forward, smiling and blushing a little. She was a very pretty girl of eighteen, with a quantity of soft, curly, jet-black hair, eyes in which one shade of hazel deepened to another, and a skin of what the French call "teint mat," rather thick, and pale like ivory. She had a little the look of a spoiled child, and yet the manner of a girl who had not quite found her level.

"I'm so glad to see you, Mr. Cantillon," she said softly. "Do you know, I never had my picture taken before, and Mr. Geoffrey Thorne is doing it for Miss Latimer."

"Mr. Geoffrey Thorne?" said the Rector, and turning to the artist he held out his hand to him. "I am very glad to make your acquaintance. Miss Latimer has written to me about you from Switzerland."

OUT OF TOWN.

THE newspapers would just now render a public service if they published, in addition to their meteorological and other diagrams, a chart of the distribution of people who are "out of town." It is all very well to say that there are still some few millions of people left in the great metropolis; but that statement only conveys a superficial view of the situation. We don't all go out of town at the same time;

but, from the little ragged urchin who is rigged up by friends and neighbours for the yearly school treat, along to the Speaker of the House of Commons, and the Lord Chancellor of England, everybody is more or less drifting from the accustomed moorings, and seeking some kind of change and recreation "out of town." Even the London sparrow is out of town, and taking his accustomed tithe of the harvest field and orchard. All the pretty warbling choir have left us for the season. There may be concerts at Scarborough or Torquay, but in London you shall hardly find even a solitary nigger minstrel to enliven the scene. Oh, yes; there are the military bands still left. Don't we hear the blare of the trumpets from the Exhibition? And there are no doubt sentries at the Horse Guards; and guard mounting goes on all the while at St. James's.

From the spirit of contradiction, indeed, there are people who profess to find London delightful when everybody is out of town. How charming to find a solitude in the Strand, where the pavement is up, and only a few loiterers are to be found; or in Piccadilly, where a thin line of vehicles passes to and fro between great stacks of wooden blocks; and to consider what a crowd of people you meet around Loch Lomond, or find elbowing each other about the summit of Snowdon! How much pleasanter, they say, is the solitude of the club, dismantled almost and in possession of washers and cleaners, than the crowded table d'hôte of some Continental hotel, or the rush for places in the saloon of the big Highland steamboat! And this is the right view to take for anybody who is compelled still to tug the oar, while the rest of the crew are enjoying their spell of liberty.

But to revert to the notion of a chart of "Out of Town," which shall be dotted, like a wreck chart, to show the places where the human swarm do chiefly congregate, and limiting its scope to the British Isles. What a dance of dots there would be all along our coasts as the period of migration fairly set in! That would be early in June, for the business world takes its holiday in good time, and if the weather be fairly genial, the watering-places of the east coast will begin to be speckled with their annual crop of visitors. Further north, too, the same rule prevails. Whitsuntide gives the signal for a general exodus from the great manufacturing towns. Then the Isle of Man boats begin to be

crowded, and the island, with its unfailing sea breezes, is filling fast with miscellaneous crowds from every quarter. Then, too, Glasgow begins to send forth its swarms, and the watering-places along the Clyde may have to announce "standing room only"; and Midsummer Day sees the summer visitants fairly established among the lochs and mountains, or streaming to and fro among the isles of the Highland Archipelago.

North Wales, too, opens early with tourists from Lancashire and the manufacturing districts. The broad sands of Rhyl, the magnificent headlands of Llandudno, are resorted to with the first breath of summer; and all the pleasant shores of the Menai Straits are filled with the unfailing tide of holiday-makers. Then, also, are the roads that lead to the heart of the hill country thickly dotted with pedestrians and cyclists, while the familiar Welsh car whirls about unremittingly from one hotel to another. Then is Llanberis Pass as thronged as a country high street on market day; while Beddgelert, in its emerald vale, is filled even to repletion. And you may fare on to the romantic valley of Maentwrog without being long out of human ken; while Festiniog, on the heights above, sees its little, toy-like railway trains arrive all loaded with excursionists. And thence to Bala, with its mirror-like lake, embosomed among the hills; wild as may be the way, it is far from being unfrequented. Another train, that races with the mountain torrent down the valley to Dolgelly, brings its quota of guests for the sweet little metropolis of Merioneth. Barmouth and its noble estuary, fringed by cloud-capped summits, everybody knows; and the rugged coast from thence to Aberystwith has its lodging-houses and bathing-machines in full demand in every nook and outlet.

As for the English lake district, successive swarms of tourists and trippists occupy the land, from the first blooming of the may till the withering frosts and chill October breezes give the signal of recall. Where else shall we find such beauty and richness of colour, such grandeur and sterility, contrasting with such luxuriant verdure, as in this charming region, which the poets and essayists of a former generation have endowed with a peculiar richness of poetic associations? We have romantic Patterdale and Ullswater, set like a jewel among hills of gold; and the wide expanse of Derwent-

water, shining clear among the mountain mists, with Skiddaw's lofty peak, and the rounded mass of Saddleback, presiding over the solemn congress of the hills.

Equally worthy of remembrance are the wild dales of the Yorkshire borders. Ribblesdale, and lofty Ingleborough, with the limestone cliffs and wondrous caves of Settle and its vicinity; and lovely Wharfedale, with Bolton Abbey as the crown of its charms; and Ilkley, with its wild moors and life-giving breezes, pure and clear as the waters in its crystal springs.

Or we may visit the more limited ranges of the Derbyshire hills, and everywhere we shall find a plentiful contingent of our friends who are out of town. There is Buxton, which people hobble into on crutches, and leave with a hop, skip, and jump; and Matlock, of milder efficacy, and with softer, sweeter charms.

But, after all, most people who are out of town are to be found at our seaside resorts. Thither, with bag and baggage, with toys, and perambulators, and buckets, and wooden spades, wends the family man, with the pleasing wife and lively children, with the nurse, and perhaps the page by way of dignity. There is a resourcefulness about the sea-shore that adapts it to all the varied tastes of young and old. An excellent mother's help is the grand old sea—at once nurse and playfellow—with its yellow sands, which he has playfully deposited for the very purpose of being dug about, entrenched, and carried by storm; and he joins himself in the fun, dashes into the fort with a rush, and carefully smooths and tidies up everything for the next day's game. Even a wet, dull day is more bearable by the sea-shore than elsewhere. There is often a rugged old jetty to shelter under; and the sea rolls in gently beneath the canopy of mist, where dim streaks of light break through at places, and a dark sail looms out of the haze, and there is a sense of space and motion all around. And what a choice there is of sea-bathing places, all within an easy radius of London, and attainable without any great fatigue and expense! Some people are all for the east coast, and will not admit that they can be braced up properly anywhere else; and for these there are the low, flat shores of Norfolk and Suffolk, with sands galore, and herring-boats, and a continuous traffic of steamers to enliven the seascape. For those who delight in broad sands, there is the Lincolnshire coast, with young

watering-places coming into favour; and the Yorkshire sea-board, for cliffs and bold rocky promontories, with Scarborough as the queen of all; and many minor lights around, all undeniably bracing and invigorating.

But there is nothing, after all, to beat the familiar Kentish coast, with the white cliffs that look so gay and bright under the sunshine, and a sea that is also bright and gay, always near, too, and available, nor ever sulking in the far horizon at low water as some seas do, but sparkling always close at hand, while close inshore come the ships of all sorts making through the Channel—a veritable tide-way of nations. Margate, Ramsgate, and Broadstairs—are they not all dear and familiar, time out of mind, to those who go out of town? And Deal, with its steep shore and bold boatmen; or Dover, with its grand heights and stir of military life; or Folkestone, bright and charming all the year round—surely these, when once visited, are returned to again and again!

When we have rounded Dungeness, there is Hastings, soft and warm, and a little sleepy; and dignified St. Leonard's, that also suggests a yawn. But Eastbourne arouses the synagogue, so to say, with bright and lively airs. But when it comes to Brighton, then one feels no longer "out of town," but only sojourning at the seaside branch of greater London. Then there is Worthing, of which it is said that people sit and weep when they first arrive there, and weep with equal bitterness when they depart; and Bognor follows, with a host of minor places, till Southsea opens upon us, with Spithead and its ever-varied scenes. And there is "the Island," delightful exceedingly in fine weather, but doleful utterly in the wet; there opens the great bright where Bournemouth spreads itself among the pine-clad hills; and yonder is grey Swanage, which is struggling into note, but is still a quiet retreat for those going out of town. As for Weymouth, that is familiar and pleasant enough; and of the noble Devon coast, with its fringe of charming towns, its combs and cliffs, and its bright seas, that sparkle with ozone like so much champagne, it would take a volume to do justice to the merits. And for people who are late in getting out of town, Cornwall may be recommended for the wild beauties of its coast and its soft, warm air, while an equinoctial gale witnessed from one of its craggy promontories is a sight to be remembered for ever.

Of the world that goes out of town, no large section quarters itself in old Ireland. Sad Erin is a little too soft and wet towards the fall, and long evenings to be spent in the rough-and-ready hostelries of the less frequented parts of the green isle form no attractive prospect. Yet the Irish themselves have the same predilection for going out of town, and the pretty watering-places and romantic nooks of county Wicklow are freely visited by the Dublin people, while the lakes of Killarney, earlier in the year, are as well frequented as any English resort. But the wild and rugged grandeur of the Atlantic coast is an affair for adventurous people without encumbrance, who are prepared to rough it in the way of sleeping accommodation and the commissariat.

With all the abundant bill of fare presented by Britannia to her guests—more abundant and varied, perhaps, than any other country can show in the wide world—people who are going out of town often turn from it with a feeling of satiety. The same people at table, the same fare, with the variation of roast and boiled, and vice versa, say they; and so they spread themselves over Europe in search of the novel and picturesque. Among the fiords of Norway, up in Iceland, or round by Spitzbergen, enterprising tourists may still be found, hoping for a private view of the aurora borealis, or the sight of a whale-chase among the Esquimaux. Less adventurous spirits content themselves with Normandy or Brittany. The Rhine and the German baths are still thronged with English, the picture galleries of Dresden and Munich echo to their footsteps, and their tweed suits and homespun costumes are familiar in the Austrian Tyrol, among the mountains of Styria, and in the more frequented regions of the Black Forest. The Swiss, too, are garnering their English harvest as fast as they can before they close their shutters and resign their mountain peaks to the frost and snow of winter, the avalanche, and the roaring blast.

As for the Mediterranean sea-board, although that is sufficiently thronged by the people who are out of town, yet the majority of those who are making their way in that direction have no intention of coming back on this side of the treacherous English spring. They are like the swallows, of which great flights were settling all about us a few days ago—swallows of the year, all young and twittering—who had never made the transit before, and

were a little nervous in consequence. A few solemn, dejected-looking starlings, some thrushes, and other birds of passage, were among the throng, whether as guides and fellow-pilgrims, or as mere accidental companions, it was not possible to ascertain. These we shall see no more till summer comes again.

But these others—our friends who are only “out of town”—we shall have back among us ere long, again to tug the labouring oar; and with them will come short days, and long nights, and blazing household fires, with lighted streets and crushes at theatre doors, and the cries of link-boys through the fog—things all very well in their way; but still, let us keep them as long as possible “out of town.”

CHARLES KEENE.

IN TWO PARTS. PART I.

A LITTLE while ago we reviewed in these columns the life-work of John Leech,* and imperfectly expressed our admiration of his genius: while regretting that a theme so worthy of fair treatment had not fallen to the hands of a more able biographer.

We have now to say some words about Charles Keene—an artist who, like Leech, has chiefly become famous through his clever work in “Punch,” although they both have other claims upon our hearty commendation. John Leech was only six years the elder of the two, but his Punch labour began about a decade ere Charles Keene had drawn a stroke for Mr. Punch, or a shilling from his treasury. Indeed, Leech had won, and won most worthily, a world-wide reputation long before Keene's talent had attracted public notice; and it was not until the former's early death, at the age of forty-six, that Keene came really to the front, and yearly made new strides ahead of all competitors. Yet it happens that his life is the first to be well written; for the pens which have been used for the biography of Leech have unluckily been placed in hands not very competent to perform their task. The Life of Keene,† however, which lately has been given us by Mr. George Somes Layard, is written well and worthily, showing the most careful study of the

* ALL THE YEAR ROUND. Third Series. Vol. vii. pp. 84, 191.

† “The Life and Letters of Charles Samuel Keene,” by George Somes Layard. (Sampson Low & Co.)

subject, and considerable industry in gathering the details needful to the work. It is evident that the writer looked upon it fondly as a labour of love; and, we may assure him, his love's labour is not lost. We may add, too, that the volume (which contains above four hundred and fifty pages) has been carefully revised by Mr. Henry Eddowes Keene, the brother of the artist; and, moreover, is enriched by many charming drawings of Charles Keene, some of which have never until now appeared in printer's ink.

Like Leech, Keene was a Londoner by birth, although he was not born within the hearing of Bow Bells, as Leech on Ludgate Hill had been. Duval's Lane in Hornsey may pride itself as having been the birthplace of Charles Keene; the day being the tenth of August, in the year '23. His father, Samuel Browne Keene, was at that time a solicitor in Furnival's Inn; having there professionally stepped into a paternal pair of shoes. Charles was the eldest of five children, two sons and three daughters, of whom four still survive. At the ripe age of seven he was sent with his small brother to a boarding school in Bayswater, situated somewhere in the Queen's Road, which was then a rural lane. The school was kept by two old ladies who were nicknamed the "Big" miss, and the "Little" one; the former being distinguished by the curious turban which she wore, and which doubtless was the cause of many furtive caricatures.

After a few years of this feminine instruction, the two brothers were sent to the grammar school at Ipswich, housed then in Foundation Street, and efficiently head-mastered by the Rev. J. Ebdon. The selection of the school was chiefly owing to the fact that the family had removed from Hornsey to Ipswich, and were living in the fine old mansion in the Buttermarket where Mrs. Keene—whose maiden name was Sparrow—had been born. In a rather complex sentence, which appears on the fifth page, it is stated that King Charles the Second had been hidden in this house; and it is suggested that his namesake, whose life is under notice, doubtless there imbibed his love of ancient things, as well as his great fondness for Eastern County folk.

Of the school life of Charles Keene there is little worth recording, except that, like John Leech, he was very fond of drawing. One of his schoolfellows still remembers "the charming sketches which he could

dash off in a moment—girls' heads, farm scenes, or caricatures." Such memories, however, are apt to be misleading; and although his school-books were lavishly embellished, as such volumes often are, it is certain that no symptoms of precocious talent were revealed. Another of his schoolmates describes him as being "of gentle disposition," and affecting "the little refinements and courtesies of society"; whereof the affectation scarce seemed natural to a schoolboy, and did not overmuch survive in later life. He is described, too, as being at that period "almost girlish" in his delicacy of feature; a description which appears to favour the tradition that his nickname was "Miss Keene."

It is furthermore recorded in proof of his good looks, that he and a boy-cousin once put their legs in petticoats, and then boldly applied to Mrs. Keene for a house-maid's situation, with the result that one of them was actually engaged. Whether the one accepted was her pretty-looking son, there seems to be at present no evidence to prove. It appears, however, clear that she was vastly well acquainted with his very boyish love of playing pranks, despite of all his girlish prettiness of face. One of her letters speaks of "my dear Charles" with all a mother's tender fondness for her firstborn; and mentions him as being "a very steady youth," though truth obliges her to own that he is "as addicted to fun as ever." Then possibly the writer may have paused awhile in writing, and have conjured up the vision of that dear, modest, long-legged, girlish-looking schoolboy, just as she had seen him some years since, indulging in a furtive dance with the nursemaid; while a delighted little sister, perched upon a linen-press, played away at an old hand-organ with all her infant might.

People gifted with short memories often speak of schoolboyhood as being quite the happiest period of life. Greek and Latin notwithstanding, it is probable that Charles Keene must have enjoyed his stay in Suffolk; for, thanks to early training, he always liked to call himself an Eastern Counties man. His country life, however, ended with his schooldays. In the year '38 his father died, and very shortly afterwards the family returned to town. Charles, by his father's wish, was placed in Furnival's Inn, and began to study Coke and Blackstone instead of Cicero and Homer. His blotting-pad, however, soon revealed the patent fact that he was turning

a deaf ear to the calling of the law, and was showing far more skill in drawing figures than in drawing pleas. So his mother very sensibly placed him with an architect, Pilkington by name, whose office lay in Scotland Yard. Here the lad found labour more congenial to his taste, and took to water-colour painting to amuse his leisure time. His mother, viewing his attempts with a fond maternal pride, thought the world should be enriched by a glimpse at such art treasures; and, after some vain efforts, she found a willing buyer, though at rather a low price. Thus it chanced that, by her faith in his artistic power, Charles Keene put the first fruit of his labour in his pocket, and his first step on the ladder which bore him high to fame.

Keene, however, found more profit in his pencil than his colour-box, although the latter first put money in his purse. Dropping architecture shortly after he had left the law, he was apprenticed for five years to a firm of wood-engravers, by name the brothers Whymper, whose business lay in Lambeth, and consisted chiefly in illustrating books. Here, no doubt, there were both idle and industrious apprentices; and, although few traces are now extant of his labours, Keene must certainly have proved himself one of the latter class. Their work was, it is said, to "draw designs upon the wood"; but whether these were chiefly of their own invention, is a matter left in doubt. Some pencil studies drawn by Keene, to illustrate the famous story of Defoe, have by good luck been preserved; and a wood-cut is still extant of one of these small drawings, bearing on the margin the signature "C. Keene." But whether the Keene Crusoe—the first known work of the artist—was ever really published, Mr. Layard frankly owns himself unable to discover; even the British Museum affording him no help. He is thereby doubtless justified in stating that it was not until the "Book of German Songs," which Dr. Dulcken had translated, appeared in 1856, that "the first book illustrated altogether independently by Charles Keene saw the light."

Genius has been defined as the gift of a capacity for taking immense pains; and there is little room for doubt that, during his apprenticeship, Charles Keene was most painstaking in the pursuit of his art. Sir John Millais has asserted, on the strength of his experience, that for artists "inspiration" is not to be relied on, and that good

hard work is essential to success. Some casual words of Keene, written while he served the Whympers, may be cited here as showing us how very hard he worked. A letter to his schoolmate, who now is General Mercer, dated merely "Sunday evening," but labelled "1842," begins in ancient fashion with a lot of rather formal excuses for long silence, and a needless bit of Latin trotted out in a parenthesis; and particularly mentions having "been so busy lately," and "been on the sick list," and told by a doctor that "he thought I worked too hard." So the writer very sensibly resolves to "relax a little for a short time, and to be as jolly as I can." Then, by way of relaxation, he tells of a strange dream he lately dreamed, and relates how he was wandering about the fields and shady lanes "with yourself and a host of females, ladies"; and how the troop of wanderers were vaguely "somehow or other characters in one of Shakespeare's plays, I don't know which. It was a magnificent illusion," says the writer, and then abruptly adds, "I have not been to a dance for a long time," as though a dance had been suggested by the ladies of his dream.

About the year '45, his term of service with the Whympers being over, Keene began to work upon his own account. The word "strugglifer," which lately has been popular in Paris, had not then been invented, or certainly he might well have applied it to himself. Lodging near Great Ormond Street, he earned his living by his pencil; and became a drawer on wood for such publishers or engravers as found work for him to do. His chief source of subsistence was the "Illustrated London News," although the task of making sketches of ship launches and speech-makings, and ball-rooms and balloonnings, was little to his taste. He even one year drew a cartoon for Zadkiel's famous Almanack, and prophetically crammed it full of coming horrors of the most alarming kind.

To serve by way of studio, he rented an old ramshackle sky-parlour in the Strand, which formed a striking contrast to the lordly palace-houses which artists now possess. A drawing of this old "den" of his, done by his own hand, was given to a friend, at whose death it was sent to Christie's, and there purchased by the artist himself. From this drawing, which has been engraved to decorate his *Life*, a fair notion may be formed of his surroundings while at work; but they were really more chaotic

than the picture represents. The present writer can bear witness to the truth of the remark that "the room must have been considerably tidied up before sitting for its portrait," and he has a vivid recollection of the dangers which attended a visit to the den, and which Mr. Thomas, of the "Graphic," thus describes:

"One had to climb a dark, rickety staircase, and after fumbling among some old woodwork, you found the door. You then had to make your way by dodging and stooping your head among clothes-lines drawn across the room, carrying all sorts of old costumes and properties, until, on gaining the light, the tall figure of our friend would slowly rise from his work, and greet you with that peculiarly pleasant, but somehow somewhat sad, smile. The short Cromwellian clay-pipe was instantly filled—it only held a thimbleful of tobacco—and a dilapidated chair or stool was drawn up to the hearth. . . . A large handsome cheval glass, looking peculiarly out of place, was a conspicuous object, and was used largely by Keene to reflect his own figure, as the most useful and inexpensive model, and always at hand. You can easily trace the result of using this mirror in his drawings. At this period the figures portrayed were always tall, with long legs and large feet."

Another witness, Dr. Dulcken, who remembers the old den, has thus described its tenant:

"I remember him a very grave, saturnine-looking young fellow, with a face like a young Don Quixote—shy even to awkwardness with strangers; but lighting up immensely among friends. He had a quiet, humorous way with him, and was very popular already then among men of his own age."

It was in this quaint old garret studio of his that Charles Keene first began the work that chiefly made him famous—the drawings, namely, which appeared in "Punch" for nearly forty years, and, after the first decade, well-nigh every week. At first he modestly declined to let his name be known, and suffered his friend Henry Silver, who furnished him with subjects, to bear the honour and to share some of the profit of the work. His first "Punch" drawing—unsigned—appeared towards the end of '51, but not till three years later did his modesty permit him to put "C. K." to his work. Meanwhile he marked it with a mask, a monogram devised for hiding his identity, and

which was not dropped entirely even after his initials had appeared. Few at first, his drawings grew more frequent with each year; and on the sixth of February, 1860, he appeared at the "Punch" table, and there met his old friend Silver, and the seven other men who then were on the staff.

After some half-dozen years or so of hard work in the Strand—the old house, numbered 291, was pulled down not long since—Keene removed his pipes and properties, his lay figure and cheval glass, to a studio in Clipstone Street, and left his rooms in Bloomsbury to live with his mother and her daughters, at a pleasant little well-nigh country-looking cottage in the now 'bus-overburdened and bustling Hammersmith Road. His new studio was hardly more palatial than his old one, being half of an old shed beside a stone-mason's yard. However, being on the ground floor—in fact, the shed had no top storey—it was easier of approach than his garret in the Strand, and it possessed the further charm of giving access to the yard, and thus affording space for sketching in the open air.

The room, whereof his old friend Wingfield hired the other moiety, had hitherto been rented by the "Artists' Society," but they migrated to Langham Chambers at the end of '54, and have been housed there ever since. Keene had been for years a member of this artistic body, together with John Tenniel, Fred Walker, Poynter, Calderon, Carl Haag, and many others, whose names, then hardly known, have since grown famous like his own. Although not an art-school—for the members worked or not at their sweet will, and there was nobody to instruct them—the Society was greatly useful to young artists, as it afforded them the means of drawing figures from the life. Indeed, imperfect though it was, and densely clouded with tobacco smoke, the training Keene went through there was the best he ever had, for his employment with the Whympers had scarcely been artistic in the true sense of the word.

Every Friday evening, in lieu of their life studying, the Artists' Society became a sort of sketching club, no figure being "set." Instead of this, a subject was suggested, and two hours were allotted, wherein they had full liberty to treat it as they liked. Their power of quick invention was thus called into play, and the meeting ended merrily in harmony and

smoke. It seems a pity that Keene's pencillings have not been preserved, but his comrades never guessed how great a genius he would grow. Doubtless, many a precious sketch was swept up by the charwoman and used to light the fire with, or was haply carried home and thrown into the waste basket—"Edax rerum" literary as well as artistic.

A similar sketching rule prevailed at a friend's house, where Keene was then a frequent visitor, and where young artists were invited to supper, sketch, and smoke, and occasionally sing. Here, however, there was kept with sacred care a big book of blank leaves, yclept the "Book of Beauty," wherein praiseworthy drawings were pasted and preserved. Into this precious volume the present writer more than once was privileged to peep, and can distinctly still remember a trio of designs with which its pages were enriched. The '48 French Revolution then being to the fore, its motto had been cited as fit subject for the sketchers. Liberty and Fraternity were furnished fairly well with appropriate designs, and Equality was shown by a dustman and a dandy reeling homeward arm-in-arm for mutual assistance, being gloriously drunk.

In connection with his "Punch" work, which, beginning in the Strand, was carried on to Clipstone Street, mention may be made here of Keene's work for "Once a Week." This magazine was started in July, '59, by the then proprietors and publishers of "Punch," whose artists greatly helped to make the new work a success. In the first and second volumes there were more than eighty charming drawings by John Leech, nearly a score by Tenniel, and fifty-four by Keene; and in the first nine volumes—two appearing every year—nearly a hundred and fifty drawings were given by his hand. Many of these were done to illustrate a tale called "Evan Harrington," written by George Meredith, and many others for a story by Charles Reade, entitled "A Good Fight," which was afterwards enlarged into "The Cloister and the Hearth." Most of them show some traces of his love for German art, as practised then by Menzel, whose works he more and more admired as time went on. Menzel, in his turn, proved himself in after years a great admirer of Charles Keene. Indeed, he was the first to open an acquaintanceship; for seeing in Berlin some drawings of "C. K.," he sent him his photograph and his signature thereon.

Keene was doubtless highly pleased at receiving such a present, and forthwith screwed up his courage to send Menzel a few studies of his own, telling a friend modestly, "I know I shall be in a funk when they are gone." Menzel, however, was so delighted with the drawings that he not merely proposed to exchange some of his own for some of Keene's, but he became thenceforth a regular "Punch" subscriber, solely for the sake of the "C. K." work therein.

The lives of modern artists are not very eventful, and Keene's was even less so than many we could name. The great event of marriage, which is common enough nowadays, even among artists, never chanced to stir his quiet course of living. True to his first love of drawing, he remained throughout his life solely wedded to his art. A hard worker from the first, he worked hard to the last. His pleasures were as few and simple as his wants. Though not a whit unsocial, he cared little for "society," and had small taste for "functions" in the fashionable meaning—and misuse—of the word. An ardent lover of antiquities, he let his fondness for things ancient affect in some degree his dealings with his tailor, and, fearless of incurring the rebuke of Mrs. Grundy, he cared far less for new fashions than for old "fairy" pipes.

The ways of modern journalists were little to his liking, and he shrank from seeing his name paraded needlessly in print. Long after he grew famous his modesty outlived the recognition of his talent; and, while quick to praise the excellence of others, he hated to hear trumpeting belauding his own work. Some three years before his death a few of his etchings, shown in Paris, were very much commended there, and he was asked by a French publisher to give some details of his life. Whereupon he thus unobtrusively himself to a sympathising friend:

"I am amused at the idea of putting me down as a 'Graveur du XIX^e Siècle'! I have only scratched a few studies of sketches, not more than a dozen all told, I should think—the merest experiments! Titles they have not. To save my life I couldn't tell the dates. And as to writing my life! 'Story, God bless you, sir, I've none to tell.' The most stirring incidents in my life are a visit to the dentist (date

* *Needy Knifegrinder*.—"Story? God bless you, I have none to tell, sir."

Poetry of the Anti-Jacobin.

forgotten) and certain experiences of the last few days. Try to choke the French biographer off."

AZRAEL.

With quiet step, and features veiled and hidden
From all of mortal mould,
He comes once more who ever comes unbidden,
A Presence grey and cold.

Before him lies a silence sad and dreary,
As failing Hope departs;
Behind him rolls a mournful miserere,
The wail of anguished hearts.

Sounds man's deep sob, when ties are rent asunder,
So sweet and yet so brief,
And childhood's cry, where loss is touched with wonder,
And woman's truer grief.

Not yet around the veiled and sombre angel
We see the glory burn,
Nor hear the whisper of the blest evangel
Below his accents stern.

The pain of Loss in Patience issues slowly,
But he who still aspires
Shall find his life serenely made and holy
By Sorrow's cleansing fires,

Till this dark Presence, robbed of all its terror,
Blooms in eternal youth,
And opens for us, freed from fault and error,
The golden gates of Truth.

LOVE'S MADNESS.

A COMPLETE STORY. CHAPTER I.

MISS GRACE FARNHAM was carefully tending the finest rose-bush in her pretty old-world garden. Click-clip, click-clip! went her bright scissors with even monotony as she robbed the poor bush of half its treasures, and ruthlessly deprived it of quantities of leaves and small unnecessary twigs.

Miss Grace had been a fresh, pretty country girl once, the darling of her mother's heart and the belle and pride of the whole village; but that was very many years ago, before the brown eyes—which had wrought such havoc in their time—had grown faded and dim, and were hidden away behind a great pair of spectacles; before the rounded cheeks had become sunken and wrinkled; before the sunny chestnut hair had demoralised into six fat little grey curls—three on each side of the face—and before the pretty, red-lipped mouth had ceased to laugh mischievously and disclose the even white teeth and those enchanting dimples for which she was famed.

Miss Grace never laughed now; sometimes a vague, patient smile would flit across her plain, worn old face, lending it a pathetic beauty which it would otherwise

assuredly have lacked. There is always something beautiful about an old face, no matter how homely it may be, and it was this patient smile alone which saved Miss Grace from being utterly condemned by the critical little world in which she lived as a remarkably ugly old maid.

Her elder sister, Miss Farnham, was a small, shrivelled, perky little body, who had never been pretty or in the least degree admired, and who did not cherish the memory of even one love-story of her own. No, Stella had always been absolutely practical and far above such a foolish sentiment as love; and on this she prided herself not a little.

She had been an excellent and absolutely dutiful daughter to her mother, and had striven to be a good, careful sister to Miss Grace; and if she had a temper of her own and a sharp tongue, she was like the proverbial dog who, we are taught to believe, is more to be feared for his voice than for his teeth.

And Miss Grace snipped and tweaked at her rose-bush, pounced upon unsuspecting caterpillars, and lent a rather inattentive ear to her sister's incessant chat, the while being dreamily occupied by thoughts of her own.

Miss Farnham was not idle while she talked, her nimble fingers were busily working at a huge length of coarse calico; she was always to be seen sewing calico, with what end in view not even the wisest gossip in the village could disclose, but it was shrewdly supposed that the mysterious lengths of stuff were converted into sheets and sent up to London to some charitable institution.

"Stella," said Miss Grace meditatively, as she tenderly clipped off a full-blown rose, and half-unconsciously interrupted her sister in the midst of a grave harangue as to the best and swiftest method of ridding a garden of slugs; "Stella, I have waited patiently for very many years."

"Hush, Grace!" whispered Miss Farnham reprovingly; "supposing some one in the neighbouring garden should hear you, I should feel greatly ashamed."

"There is no one in the next garden," answered Miss Grace mildly; "no one at all; but I will not mention the matter again if you would prefer me not to, although it is a great relief to me to speak out all that is in my heart to some one who can sympathise with me."

"Grace, Grace!" and Miss Farnham laid her work down in her lap for one

brief moment and regarded her sister with stern displeasure; "we are both too old to trouble ourselves about such matters. It is not as if you were a silly, flighty, love-sick girl, but," with cruel truth, "we are just a couple of plain, elderly women, you and I, and as such should be thinking of higher things than the petty troubles and disappointments of this world. I tell you once more, for the nine hundredth time, that Oliver Deane will never come now—never! Why, you are—let me see—how old are you, Grace?"

"Never mind!" Miss Grace snapped in a manner entirely foreign to her gentle nature; then she turned and faced Miss Farnham suddenly, with a flush on her old withered face and a strange, unnatural light in her eyes: "It was on a day like this, Stella, a warm, glorious summer day, and we were standing together under the lime-trees, Oliver and I, and he was bidding me farewell—a long, long farewell; and he took my hands in his and held them firmly, and smiled down into my face with his kind, true eyes, saying—"

"Yes, Gracie, yes," interrupted Miss Farnham more kindly than was her wont; "yes, dear, you have told me what he said."

Oh, how well she knew that old story, the poor little story which Miss Grace had worn threadbare by almost constant repetition; and worse than all else, how well practical Miss Farnham knew that all the romance founded on that story had been a sad mistake so far as Oliver Deane was concerned! She knew too well that out of all Miss Grace's long-ago admirers this handsome young ne'er-do-weel had never for a moment cherished one serious thought of love for the girl who had, all unknown to him, given her young heart into his careless keeping.

She had loved, and he had gone away—as is too frequently the manner of the contrary individuals who people this perplexing world of ours—and there most assuredly the matter should have ended; but no, Miss Grace, through all the quiet, uneventful years which had worn away since that all-important summer day, had still obstinately cherished a calm, unalterable belief that Oliver Deane would come back again to her, and this belief was founded merely on a few thoughtless words which he, at least, had forgotten as soon as they were uttered.

"Wait till I have made my fortune," he had said half-laughingly, "and then I

shall come back to this sleepy little village and look for a wife; and you, Gracie, must be waiting here for me."

Poor Miss Grace! For the sake of these few words she had turned aside from the giddy paths of flirtation which possess such powers of keen fascination for the young and flighty; for their sake she had suddenly sobered down from a gay and careless girl into a grave, sedate woman; for their sake she had chosen to live a life of single blessedness; and now—more piteous than all besides—she, as an old, faded, worn-out woman, was still clinging with resolute foolishness to the belief that somewhere or other, near or far, her truant lover was toiling late and early for her sake, just as faithfully as she watched late and early for his coming. She would far, far rather have doubted her religion than the fact that Oliver Deane was coming soon, very soon, to redeem his promise.

When she was younger she had fretted with all the natural impatience of youth at the tardiness of her lover; her bright face had grown pale and sad as she waited for the news of him which never came, and her merry brown eyes had oftentimes grown dim with tears at the weariness of their useless watching; but then as the years crept on, instead of losing all hope and resigning herself to the inevitable, Miss Grace, strange to say, grew still firmer in her faith, and felt convinced that her lover was close at hand. All the world might be false, but Oliver Deane would never break his word to her.

So as every hour, every day, week, month, and year passed over her head she rejoiced, for they seemed to bring him nearer. She possessed one keepsake of this supposed lover of hers, a wee painted miniature—enshrined in a large and abominable gold and turquoise locket—which showed that Oliver Deane had been quite handsome enough to turn many a girl's foolish head. It made him out as having a frank, manly, Saxon face, with irreproachable features and fine blue-gray eyes, and bright golden hair and moustache which might have alone almost explained Miss Grace's otherwise unaccountable weakness and folly.

This, then, and a few careless words had fed the fire of her love for years—poor Miss Grace!

"I still am sure," observed Miss Grace after a long pause, and with an involuntary sigh, "that Oliver Deane will soon be here now."

"Rubbish!" exclaimed Miss Farnham vigorously; then in an argumentative tone: "It is improbable—impossible that such a thing should occur; and besides, even if he did come to see us, just consider how changed we should all find each other. Think what his age must be, and how altered he would be to when last we saw him."

"No matter what his age or appearance may be, Stella," answered little Miss Grace with gentle dignity, "Oliver Deane will be the same to me always."

"H'm!" grunted Miss Farnham contemptuously; "but perhaps you have not considered whether you may always be the same to Oliver Deane."

"Yes, dear, I have considered," calmly; "and as I have trusted Oliver all my life, since my early girlhood, I cannot bring myself to doubt his faith and the strength of his love now. He will come again, and we will be the same to each other as we were on the day when we parted in the lime-walk."

CHAPTER II.

THE lime-walk was, needless to say, Miss Grace's favourite haunt. It ran along beside the tall garden wall which shut off the high-road from the Miss Farnhams' grounds, and here the two sisters were wont to stroll together under the shade of the trees, or else sit sewing or reading on the little rustic bench down by the garden gate.

And it was whilst they sat here one calm summer evening that the sound of quick, firm footsteps fell upon their ears—footsteps which came on and on up the quiet high-road towards them.

Miss Farnham stitched on serenely, indifferent to either the footsteps or their owner, but Miss Grace laid her work down beside her on the bench and listened anxiously, her head bent forward, and her two old bony hands twining nervously together in her lap.

On and on the steps came, and some one paused before the garden gate, swung it open, and then—

A tall, stalwart young fellow stood, hat in hand, and looked down at the two little scared, trembling old ladies who rose to greet him. The evening sun shone down upon his curly golden head and lighted up his bronzed face and handsome blue-grey eyes, and Miss Grace went forward with hands outstretched, and all the pent-up love and joy of two-score years

shining on the new-comer from behind her spectacles.

"Oliver!" she said, in a low, quivering voice, "you have come back—at last!"

He took her hands in a firm, strong clasp, and looked straight into her face with the faintest suspicion of a puzzled smile hovering under his fair moustache.

"My name is Oliver—Oliver Deane," he said in the voice she remembered so well, "but I can't imagine how you know it. Did my father write to you and tell you that I was coming? It's nice to be welcomed like this; I fancied I should have to explain who I was."

Miss Farnham moved forward—stern, practical Stella—with her treasured calico gathered upon her arms.

"It is your father whom we remember, I think," she said, with difficulty sparing him a hand out of the midst of the white bundle which she held; "my sister recognises you from your extraordinary resemblance to him. We knew an Oliver Deane many, many years ago—are you his son?"

"Yes," he replied; "and he told me, when I came to England to be sure to come to his native village and look up all his old friends, but you are the only ones I can find."

He looked from one to the other of the old ladies, wondering which could possibly be the one to whom his father had often laughingly alluded as "a pretty little flirt who turned all the fellows' heads."

"Grace," said Miss Farnham, going close to her sister and speaking very decidedly, "this is Oliver Deane's son; is not the likeness remarkable?"

Miss Grace was smiling her own gentle, patient smile, and did not seem to notice anything but the tall figure standing before her.

"You have not altered much," she said dreamily; "you are just the same as when you went away all those long years ago."

"Grace!" This time Miss Farnham's voice fell harshly on her senses and made her attentive. "Go to the house, Grace, and ask Jane to bring out some wine and cake for Mr. Deane."

And Miss Grace went willingly enough upon the errand, trotting nimbly away over the smooth, well-kept lawn to the side door of the house, where she startled their young servant by appearing suddenly in the little kitchen and announcing briskly:

"Quick, Jane, Mr. Oliver has come

back, and we wish for the port wine, and the fresh seed-cake, and three wine-glasses—the best ones, mind—so bring them all on a tray to the lime-walk at once, like a good girl."

Jane stared curiously, wondering who on earth Mr. Oliver could be, and why Miss Grace looked so happy.

Then back again, very swiftly, the old lady returned to the lime-walk where Miss Farnham was entertaining their guest, and tearfully explaining something to him—something connected with Miss Grace and her forgetfulness, and how much she had aged of late, and what queer mistakes she was apt to make.

After this young Oliver Deane did not allude to his father again, but sat on the rustic bench between his hostesses and stoically drank the sweet, sticky port wine with which they hospitably plied him. Then at last, when he rose to go, a pair of nervously winking brown eyes looked up at him from behind a pair of spectacles, and an old quavering voice asked:

"When will you come again, Oliver? You will not stay away for so long again?"

"No," he replied, telling the lie with praiseworthy promptitude. "I will come very soon."

He was sailing for his home in Australia the next day, but Miss Farnham had implored him—with a vague, undefined fear which she had, all at once, been forced to entertain—to humour her sister.

On the very spot where, years before, Oliver Deane had bidden farewell to pretty Grace Farnham, his son stood and held the old maid's quivering hand in his. It seemed to her as if she were young once more, as if all the weary waiting of the past years had been a sad, dark dream, and as if the present alone was true, and sweet, and real. So she lived in the sunshine of her little romance once more; and when at last Oliver Deane passed through the gate and away out of sight and hearing down the high-road, Miss Grace turned back quietly to her sister.

"I am puzzled, Stella," she said thoughtfully; "he does not seem changed in appearance at all, but somehow he is different—cold, and strange, and not like himself."

"Gracie!" Miss Farnham's voice was shrill, and her face white and drawn. "Gracie, surely you cannot believe that this young man was the Oliver Deane

whom we knew when we were girls?" Then very gently: "Dear, what has come to you? Can you possibly think that he would be just the same after all these years?"

"It puzzles me, dear Stella," was Miss Grace's gentle answer; "it all seems so very strange, and although I have been expecting his coming for so long, and felt certain that he would keep his word to me, yet still the meeting seemed to come upon me very suddenly. I am thankful I had the strength and courage to trust him—so thankful!" And as she spoke there was a new brightness in her dim brown eyes, and the same vague, patient smile on her lips. "It has been hard sometimes, Stella, to believe that he had not forgotten me, particularly when I saw how foolish you considered me; and then, oh, the years have been so long, dear—so long! but yet something always seemed to tell me that some day he would come; and Stella, Stella, you see now that I was right!"

"Come, Grace," said Miss Farnham hoarsely, drawing her sister's hand within her arm, "the sun is going down, and it is chilly out here; let us go back into the house, and—and you must rest after all this excitement."

Together the two lonely little old maids left the shadowy lime-walk where this last terrible blow had fallen on them; and as Miss Farnham paced by her sister's side over the lawn, where the last rays of the glowing red sun were resting, she realised fully how deep were the cruel wounds which the weary years of waiting had made in Miss Grace's gentle heart, and to what they had at last brought her. Poor little old maids!

All through the summer they humoured her, Miss Farnham and good-hearted Jane, and sometimes the doctor.

He would come again in the autumn, they said, and Miss Grace watched the leaves in the garden grow red, and gold, and brown, and even when they fluttered to the ground and were blown hither and thither by the wild winds, and when she knew that winter was close at hand—he never came.

They told her that he would come in the spring-time, and they used to move her great arm-chair close to the window where she could see down to the lime-walk, and the rustic bench, and the old garden gate; and she saw how the snow all melted away at the caressing touch of the bright

sunshine which seemed to glint and sparkle everywhere, even in her dark, gloomy bedroom; and even when she saw the welcomed buds and leaflets on the lime-trees in the old walk, she asked—and no, even then he had not come.

The rose-bushes were all in bloom once more, and Jane gathered handfuls of them and carried them in to Miss Grace; and Miss Farnham laid them on her bosom and in her thin folded hands.

She had trusted all through the long spring-time, and then at last when the scent of the flowers was wafted up from the pretty garden to her window, and she knew that another summer was come, she smiled her old gentle, patient smile, and closed her tired eyes, and rested—for Oliver Deane never came.

BETTY BOLAINÉ, A KENTISH MISER.

IN the ancient city of Canterbury, with its beautiful cathedral, dim cloisters, and quaint old streets, slumbering so peacefully amid the Kentish hopfields, there still lingers a tradition of a strange, eccentric character who passed all her long life within its confines. Here and there an old inhabitant, if you question him on the subject, will tell you stories that have come down to him of Betty Bolaine, the famous miser; but with most people, even in Canterbury, her existence is now forgotten, and her quaintly pretty name is only a name and nothing more.

Elizabeth Bolaine, born in 1732, was the only daughter of Noah Bolaine, "an eminent apothecary of the city of Canterbury." He appears to have been a man of some property, and to have been held in high respect by his fellow-citizens. Whether it is true, as her biographer states, that his daughter in her youth visited in the best "London and county society," we cannot now say; county society, if such was the case, can hardly have been so exclusive as we are apt to imagine. Betty, as she was usually called, it is true, was not only pretty and graceful, but quick-witted and shrewd, and doubtless always most excellent company. Moreover, she was reputed an heiress, and it is quite evident that she never lacked admirers willing to link their fate with hers.

Amongst them was a dashing captain, who became so enamoured of Betty's

dancing at a public ball, that he persuaded her to elope with him, intending to marry her in the Fleet. But Miss Bolaine, though she dearly loved a flirtation, was always strangely reluctant to take upon herself the restraints and responsibilities of matrimony. When she and her lover reached the Strand she raised such a hue and cry that the passers-by stopped the coach and rescued her.

Another admirer generously offered to keep a coach-and-four for her if only she would consent to be his bride, but again Betty's heart failed her. Perhaps she had small faith in lovers' promises, or, it may be, she feared that the gentleman was of too lavish a disposition to make her a suitable partner for life.

A third aspirant for her hand, who had probably learnt that his fair one had a trick of changing her mind, induced her to sign a bond giving him two hundred pounds if she failed to keep her promise. Every preparation had been made for the wedding, and the parson was waiting in the church to marry them. When the bridegroom called—as seems to have been the custom in those days—to take his bride to church, she persuaded him, as a last token of his trust in her, to restore the bond and go on without her, promising to follow him a few minutes later. For more than an hour the deluded man awaited in vain the fickle Betty. Finally he was obliged to retire, amid the jeers and laughter of a large crowd which had assembled to witness the ceremony.

At the death of her father Betty and her only brother each inherited a sum of fifteen hundred pounds, whilst their mother was left three thousand, a sum sufficient in those days to yield a comfortable income. Yet, notwithstanding, Mrs. Bolaine's life is said to have been shortened by the privations she endured through the miserly habits of her unnatural daughter. Till now Betty's propensities had only been noticeable to the shrewdest observers by a certain slatternliness in her dress. Henceforward all Canterbury knew that Betty Bolaine was a miser. Her brother, happily, was of a different nature, and seems to have been as kind to his mother as his strong-willed, penurious sister would allow him to be. As usual, however, it was Betty, not he, who inherited all Mrs. Bolaine's savings.

After the old lady's death, in spite of the ill-repute which was already beginning to be attached to Betty's name, she found

another wooer, this time in a man of wealth and position, but forty years her senior. Once again were preparations made for a wedding, but at the last moment the elderly lover refused to settle the whole of his property upon his bride, whereupon matrimony immediately lost all charms for Betty, and she declined to marry. None the less she took up her abode in the old gentleman's house, and thanks to his strange infatuation, succeeded in rendering the remainder of his life miserable to him and profitable to herself. On his death, two or three years later, she inherited a legacy of fifty pounds and a "handsome chariot." The latter gift must have been rather a white elephant for one of Betty's way of life; but she managed to turn a penny by letting it out on hire.

Her last lover was a Mr. B——; his full name is never given, and probably is now forgotten. Why Betty, who had refused so many more eligible suitors, should have consented to wed Mr. B—— is one of the mysteries of her life. She may have been attracted by his parsimonious habits, for he was even a greater miser than herself, and gave Betty many a wrinkle as to how to save a halfpenny; with her customary shrewdness she may also have recognised in him a weaker character than herself, whom she might mould as she willed.

Mr. B—— had a furnished house at St. Lawrence—just then rising into repute as a watering-place—which he was in the habit of letting for the season. Betty, in spite of her slatternly ways, revelled in sea-bathing, and she and her husband made many a jaunt together to the seaside, where she bathed inexpensively without a machine or a gown. They drove in the famous chariot, drawn by a wretched, half-famished steed, till the poor animal died of starvation, after which sad event the mean old couple were forced to trudge the fifteen long miles that lie between Canterbury and St. Lawrence on foot.

During the lifetime of Mr. B——, Miss Bolaine always passed as his wife, and on one occasion even took an oath that they were man and wife. But when, at his death, it was discovered that he was an uncertified bankrupt, and his creditors prepared to come down on his rich widow for the recovery of his debts, Betty, who was never deterred by any scruple of honesty from acting as seemed most to her own advantage, promptly took another oath that she had never been legally mar-

ried. No doubt the wretched woman was in a horrible state of alarm, for her money, dearer to her than life, or friends, or reputation, was in danger. She talked seriously of settling in France, and went so far as to sell eight thousand pounds out of her favourite "four-per-cents," which she made over to her niece, whom she knew she could trust. When her husband's creditors ceased to trouble her, the money was refunded.

Mr. B—— left a curious will, concocted no doubt by his wily partner, in which he left the whole of his property to Ann Bolaine—the niece previously mentioned—in trust for her Aunt Elizabeth, his beloved spouse, and the sister of Noah Bolaine. A son by a former wife received nothing, and, it was said, was even cheated out of a thousand pounds left him by his own mother by this terrible Betty.

This Ann Bolaine was the daughter of Betty's brother, who had married a Miss Farnham, the sister of the then Countess of Denbigh. She was a beautiful girl, and the idol of her skinflint aunt; but she died at the early age of twenty. Betty, who, according to her biographer, enjoyed the credit of shortening the lives of all belonging to her, was naturally accused of hastening her niece's end. Ann, however, was, no doubt, a delicate girl. There is a story of her being once "in a poor state of health," and going for change of air, with her mother, to visit the Countess of Denbigh. Betty, who never lost a chance of increasing her store, took advantage of her sister-in-law's absence to install herself in her house, where she not only lived rent free, but even made money by letting lodgings, without, as her biographer graphically puts it, "either paying rent or sasses!"

Unlike most other misers, Betty appears to have been a sociable old body, and to have had numerous acquaintances in all grades of society. One of her best friends was a poor cobbler at Wincheap, an outlying district of Canterbury. For many years he and Betty took their breakfast together, Betty supplying her own bread and butter, with a teapot, whilst the cobbler provided boiling water. After breakfast she would often, in winter time, remain the whole morning, crouching over a pan of coals in the cobbler's shop. Two days in the week she dined with another friend; and for tea she had her regular round, having a friend for every day in the week, who provided her with that meal.

Any other trifling necessities were always supplied by gifts. It is difficult to surmise at this distance of time the motives that prompted so much kindness to one so despicable as Betty Bolaine. Vague hopes of obtaining something in the shape of a reward at her death, one would think hardly sufficient to render the presence of a person of her habits and morals endurable at one's table.

Although always advising others to practise economy in fuel by lying in bed, Betty never adopted this plan herself, preferring, if a friend's fire was not at her disposal, to wander about the streets, no matter what might be the state of the weather. As her money was invested chiefly in the Funds, and she could trust no one to collect her dividends, she was obliged to make frequent journeys to London. These were usually performed on foot, varied only by an occasional lift in a waggon. Betty probably enjoyed these visits as much as people nowadays enjoy a trip to Switzerland. She carried with her sufficient provisions for the way, partaking of them beneath the shelter of a roadside hedge, perhaps in the company of some friendly tramps or gipsies, who probably imagined her only a poor "mumper" like themselves. The whole cost of the journey, a distance of a hundred and twelve miles, she calculated at something under two shillings. Strange to say she was never robbed, no doubt her sordid appearance averted all suspicion of the large sums she carried concealed about her person; though the fact must certainly have been well known to many persons in Canterbury. On one occasion only—when on the death of Mr. B—— she sold the eight thousand pounds out of the Funds and took possession of the scrip—she committed the extravagance of returning to Canterbury with her treasure by boat from Gravesend. The voyage, however, proved such a rough one that the miser resolved for the future to keep to the road.

Although Betty could enjoy a good table when the expense was defrayed by some one else, no crust was too mouldy, no meat too tainted for her to consume when she had to pay herself. It is very evident that all her life long there was nothing that Betty so enjoyed as being treated, in her younger days by lovers, in her old age by persons who either pitied her or expected to be benefited at her death. We are told that she had a pleasant trick of popping in upon her friends at dinner-time with her

favourite saying that "one volunteer was better than two pressed men."

In spite of a life of privation and hardship, this extraordinary character lived to the advanced age of eighty-three, dying in 1805, somewhat suddenly. The jury, at the coroner's inquest, brought in a verdict of "died by the visitation of God," but in reality there seems to have been nothing mysterious about her death, which was more in the ordinary way than her life.

By her will, no doubt to the bitter disappointment of her many friends, the Canterbury miser left the bulk of her property, amounting to twenty thousand pounds, to a prebendary of the cathedral, whom she had known but a few months.

Although all through her lifetime Betty Bolaine had shown herself utterly regardless of public opinion, she wished to be honoured at her death. Orders were left in her will that a hatchment was to be placed over the door of the wretched tenement where she had passed her last days, and that a marble monument was to be erected over her remains. According to directions she was buried in a vault in the old church of Saint Mary Magdalen, at Canterbury. A marble tablet was put up to mark the spot, and when, in 1872, the church was pulled down, this tablet, with others, was placed under the old grey tower left standing.

THE LATE MRS. VERNON.

By A. MOBERLY.

Author of "Lady Valeria," etc., etc.

CHAPTER VI.

A FORTNIGHT later I, lying idly back in my easy-chair in the window of my new quarters, watched with the interest of a child the busy life of the street without, and tried to realise that I was at last free, out on my own account in the wide world, answerable to nobody but myself for my actions for the first time in my life.

Nurse Magrath, now and henceforward to be "Kitty" to me, was singing merrily to herself in the big bow-window as she snipped, and shaped, and stitched, converting two blue serge uniform gowns into a stylish walking costume by the aid of braid and buttons. Kitty and I had left the hospital that morning, and were to live together for a few weeks at least, till our respective plans should be settled. I do not know who first suggested the plan, but it was a great comfort to me. By

Kitty's advice we had taken the rooms recommended by Colonel Fortescue, a pretty little suite in a quiet street opening out of a big, fashionable thoroughfare, into which a sideways glance could be got from the balcony of the big bow-window, Kitty's delight. She managed the housekeeping, and, I may say now, imposed shamefully on my ignorance. I trusted to her implicitly, and never noticed the disproportion between the luxurious style of our quarters and the modest rent we paid. Our brisk, motherly landlady, Mrs. Brent, must also have been in the conspiracy, I have since thought. She was always suggesting some tempting invalid delicacy, and appeared to pick up game and hothouse fruit for a mere song when she went out marketing. Kitty declared it was all right, and I, in my inexperience, was satisfied. It might be London ways, for all I knew to the contrary, for lodging-houses to have delightful easy-chairs and sofas in every room, flowers in the windows, and fires in the bedrooms, as a matter of course.

I was far from being fit to take up my work again when I left the hospital, but fortunately my money difficulties were at an end for the time being. A delightful, fatherly old gentleman, a director of the railway company, had paid me a visit, and explained that he had been in the train when the accident occurred, and it was by his orders that I had been brought to the hospital. He had made himself responsible for the expenses of my illness, and now he had called to discover my views as to compensation. I was too much overcome by gratitude for his kindness to entertain such an idea, and but for Dr. Walsham's firmness in insisting on the grievous injuries I had sustained, the company might have escaped scot-free. It ended by my accepting hundreds where the whole medical staff was agreed that I ought to have demanded thousands, and the arrangement left us mutually satisfied.

Kitty was as blithe as a bird. She had all sorts of delightful business on hand to transact before returning to her remote Irish home. The raw material of her trousseau was to be purchased, and Dr. Millar had come up to town for a week's holiday to choose curtains, carpets, and wall-papers, and introduce her to some of her future relations. Moreover, he was going to take her to the theatre that very night. No wonder she sang over her work, and sewed three of her buttons on on the wrong side.

She only laughed and began to snip them off.

"If he isn't there again!" she cried, suddenly stopping, scissors in air.

"Who? Dr. Millar?"

"No, no! The man in the fur-trimmed coat. Look, quick!"

I looked, and drew back quickly, for the man, whoever he was, sauntering leisurely down the opposite side of the street with a big cigar in his mouth, was honouring Kitty's window with a sideways glance of undisguised approval which made Kitty bundle up her sewing forthwith, the buttons flying over the room like a hailstorm.

"It's the same! But I wouldn't have James know I was looking at him for worlds! Don't you remember him—the day we came here, when I dropped all the rugs getting out of the cab, and he stopped and picked them up, and James said, 'Confound his impudence'? Do you know, I'm afraid James is just the least bit in the world given to jealousy. Isn't it a pity?"

"Jealous of a man in the street?" I asked contemptuously.

"He was cross because I noticed the coat, and said he had such a lovely scarf-pin, and I wondered if he were a duke or something, and James called him an over-dressed Jew."

I agreed with "James"; I liked Dr. Millar very much. He had come to see me at the hospital, and had assisted in our removal and installation in our new quarters. He was a plain, sensible little man, rather serious and matter-of-fact, but very wise and indulgent in his dealings with his feather-headed little fiancée, so far as I could judge.

Altogether, with Kitty and her faithful James at my side, the world outside the hospital felt far less desolate than I had expected. I was as free and independent as I ever should be, and my course now lay plain before me. Here I must make a stand. The fraud which had so far been forced upon me must be avowed; for not a step farther in the wrong road would I go with my own free will.

I had thought of beginning at once, and telling Kitty, but shrank from the difficulties of that course, the endless explanations and references to "Old Walsham." I felt, too, that I owed it to Colonel Fortescue that he should be the first to be undeceived. He had hinted that caution was specially necessary in my situation, and that an indiscreet move might mean danger to me and perhaps to others.

Now Kitty's discretion was an unknown quantity.

I meant to take advantage of Kitty's absence and write to him this evening. He had left the address of his rooms with my landlady, and by to-morrow morning I solemnly swore to myself he should be in possession of the truth.

"Kitty," I said, when she came in dressed for the theatre, looking perfectly charming in a white frock, and her hair put up in the very latest fashion, "when you come home you will find a letter lying on this table. Will you ask Dr. Millar to post it?"

Kitty promised, lifting her eyebrows a little at the idea of my writing a letter—the first she had ever heard of my sending or receiving. She placed pen and paper and inkstand all in readiness on the sofa-table near me, made up the fire, and shook up my cushions, making many little penitent protestations of regret at leaving me, which did not prevent her going off looking perfectly rapturous when Dr. Millar and the cab arrived. I heard her in the hall giving Mrs. Brent minutest directions about my invalid supper; then the house door shut, and I was alone.

Alone to face my confession!

"Dear Colonel Fortescue," I began mechanically. Then I broke off. He would resent the familiarity of the address when he came to know the truth. I tried again, but no other form would suit me. It should stand. It was the first and last time I should ever write it.

It was a hard task, harder than I had imagined. I wrote, revised, and rewrote till my head was burning and my hands ice-cold. My landlady brought my dainty little meal, but I could not touch it. I recopied, amended, cancelled till she came again to help me to bed. I sent her away and sat writing on with feverish haste, for the hour of Kitty's return was drawing near. Then in sheer despair I took what I had written at first, and decided that it should stand. It seemed curt and ungracious as I read it over, but it was clear and the absolute truth. It set forth my story, saying just as much and no more than was needed for my justification.

Appeals to his pity I would none of. I fancied how he would read it, the look of cruel dismay and disappointment that would gather on his kind, handsome face, and I shivered all over and dropped my head on my hands with a bitter sob. Why had this cruel punishment come to me?

Where was my fault? I had done no wrong, I assured myself passionately, over and over again. Why was I not left the friendless, insignificant drudge of a few months ago, with no strange, bewildering experiences to stir my soul to its depths? No! There my whole spirit rose in revolt. Not so. I would take the bitter with the sweet, though the sweet was passing and the bitter would endure. I had bought some bright moments at the price of a lifetime's woe. Be it so.

I wrote my letter again steadily and clearly, read it over once more, then bowed my head over the paper, and laid a light kiss on the fold where his hand might rest. "Good-bye," I whispered softly. Then I signed it boldly and firmly, "Yours truly, Elizabeth Margison."

It was done. It lay stamped, sealed, and addressed before me, and my vacillations were at an end. I placed it on the table where Kitty would see it, then crept miserably to bed, and turned my face to the wall in utter despair.

With the next day there dawned on my soul a grievous sense of pain and loss. I was Elizabeth Margison once more, and with my false self I had cast aside, so I felt, all the life and joy of womanhood.

Yesterday I had been Mrs. Vernon, a foolish, sinful, suffering woman, but a living, sentient creature, who could love, hate, hope, enjoy; with a past that had held its pleasure as well as its pain, and a future with its glorious possibilities.

To-day and for ever I was Elizabeth Margison, a pale, colourless shadow, thankful to creep through life from hour to hour, patiently earning the day's livelihood by the day's toil.

I must not stay on here, I decided. The money I had in hand must be hoarded against a time when health and strength might fail me. I might give myself one day more. It was due to Colonel Fortescue to await his reply, I said inconsistently, though I had begged him to send none; besides, there were some of Kitty's concerns I wished to see settled. Then I would go away quietly to the Governesses' Home and, if they could receive me at once, there I would stay, writing my explanations to Kitty, and leaving it to her and Dr. Millar to decide whether we should ever meet again.

Here Kitty entered, and Mrs. Brent with my breakfast-tray. I kept in the shadow of the curtain, dreading some

comment on my wan looks; but Kitty arranged my breakfast in solemn silence, only when Mrs. Brent departed I detected something like a small sob.

"Kitty, Kitty! What is it?" I cried, starting up, and holding out my hand to catch her.

Kitty turned and looked at me, a most forlorn, disconsolate little figure. Her pretty blue eyes were rimmed with red, her hair was rumpled as if it had been lately buried in a sofa cushion, and her collar and tie put on anyhow. Evidently something serious had happened. She dropped on a chair and leant her elbows on the bed, while her tears pattered down like rain upon the counterpane. Then she wiped her eyes and began.

"Everything is wrong and horrid, and I'm sure it's no fault of mine. I didn't think James could be so cruel! I just went with him to post your letter; he looked quite pleased for me to come, and the moon was so bright and the night so warm, and then he just marched me home again without speaking a word, and left me with 'Good evening' on the door-step."

"But, Kitty, why?"

"How do I know? I can't prevent people going to the theatre; and if James never wants anybody to set eyes on me I had better go into a convent at once instead of marrying him—and I dare say he'd rather," and again Kitty's tears bedewed my bed.

"What people? Begin at the beginning, Kitty."

"I'm sure I was never thinking of anything but the play, and between the acts, of course, I looked at the people. There was a lady in a box—such a pretty woman, and her gown! I wish you could have seen it. The lace went so, you know, and was caught up on the shoulder into a puff with a sapphire dragon-fly—the very idea I want for my cream satin bodice. I was trying to take in every fold of it when James said, quite savagely, 'Sit down.' He looked furious, and then I saw just behind her the man in the fur-trimmed coat—not in the coat, of course, but evening dress, with a moss-rose in his buttonhole, and diamond studs. Of course I turned away directly. I never knew that he went on staring at me, though I don't know why he shouldn't. Then, when the second act began, if he didn't come down to an empty stall just behind us! James wanted to take me away then and there. He declared that I ought to be at home taking care of you, and we had a

regular quarrel that spoilt the whole thing for me. I came away before the third act, and we made it up in the cab. Then, when we got home and saw your letter, we went together to the pillar, and just as James was putting it in, the man—fur coat and all—came round the corner! He was laughing to himself, and looked so horribly knowing that I am sure he had listened to every word we said at the theatre. And oh, dear! what shall I do?"

I did my best to comfort her, assured her that James must see his mistake on reflection, suggested writing him a pretty, penitent note, and asking him to come to tea that evening; but nothing availed till I reminded her of the long day's shopping that we had planned to do, and declared myself well enough to get up and start as soon as she pleased. She sat up, dried her eyes, and began to rummage in her pocket for her list of purchases, and went away presently to make her hair tidy, and try to get the serge costume finished to wear.

Her spirits had quite returned by the time we started.

"I've had such a good idea," she began as we drove off. "I know what will please James more than anything. You know his sister at Bromley?" I did, and I knew that Kitty had been shirking a visit there. "She wants us to go from Saturday to Monday. Her husband is something in the City, and it will be our only chance of meeting him. I think I'll offer to go—if you do not mind?"

"Not at all," I hastened to assure her, marvelling at the way in which my forlorn little programme was being carried out. Nothing would suit me better than Kitty's absence at that juncture. I could leave the lodgings unnoticed and unquestioned, and Kitty would find my explanation waiting for her on her return. Meanwhile, I would give up this last day entirely to her. It would be a test of my own strength, and would distract my thoughts from the never-ending calculation incessantly going on in my mind: "This is Friday. My letter has reached him. He may have read it by this time. Will he write? Is his letter on the way? When will the post come in?" over and over again. I knew how I should sit at home, listening and watching through the long hours.

I was more amused and refreshed than I could have imagined by watching Kitty at work. Her whole soul was in the business, and she did it well, selecting, matching, pricing, taking in new ideas

with the air she breathed. Not a girl in England could have made her few sovereigns go so far. We chose the wedding-dress, and the travelling suit, and morning dresses, and tried on boots, and shoes, and slippers, and ordered lengths of lace and fine linen, and bought odds and ends of trimmings, and flowers, and feathers, and ribbons, and we chose the set of furs—my present to her—and the lamp which I was going to give James, and drove slowly home through the busy, lighted streets, Kitty too weary with enjoyment even to talk. As to me, I had achieved my desire of tiring myself so thoroughly that I need not dread a sleepless night. I felt my heart sinking, sinking as we approached our own door. What was awaiting me within? Nothing worse than Dr. Millar, it appeared. I caught a glimpse of him standing on the hearthrug in the sitting-room. I drew back, let Kitty enter, and softly closed the door on them. I took off my walking things very deliberately, and was standing over my fire, wondering whether it would be discreet to interrupt them just yet, when my landlady came to my door with a cup of chocolate, and I welcomed the delay. Mrs. Brent liked a gossip; I was quite intimately posted up in all the affairs of her own and her late husband's family.

"Colonel Fortescue called to-day, ma'am," she observed casually, as she took the tray away. "I've left his card in the next room, and I beg your pardon, ma'am, but I nearly forgot his message. He seemed very much annoyed at finding you out, but he hoped you would be at home to-morrow, about twelve, and would allow him to call."

"Very good," I managed to say, but my lips were so stiff I could hardly form the words, and I had to clutch the back of a chair to check the nervous trembling that seized me.

"He came quite early this morning, about ten minutes after you left," Mrs. Brent added, looking at me, I thought, curiously, though quite respectfully. "How very tired you do look, ma'am, to be sure!"

"Ask Miss Magrath to excuse me for the rest of the evening; I think I would stay here," Mrs. Brent looked as if she had something more to say, but after hesitating a moment, left me.

The course of Kitty's true love seemed to be running smoothly once more when she came to bid me good night. James, on reflection, had been rather ashamed of

himself, and had made apology and sufficient explanation. He knew the man in the fur coat, it seemed—at least, by name and reputation—a very shady reputation, indeed, and had seen him hanging about the hospital just before our departure. Kitty's suggestion of leaving town had delighted him, and they were to start next morning.

I made some languid proffers of assistance in completing her preparations, which were sternly declined that night, but eagerly accepted next morning. I was in a fever of anxiety to see her really off.

"How kind you are!" she cried. "Good-bye, dear Mrs. Vernon," and she ran off to the cab, leaving her muff and umbrella upstairs, and dropping her purse and glove button-hook in the hall. James followed and picked them up, and they were really gone at last.

"Good-bye, Mrs. Vernon," I repeated to my own moody reflection in the glass as I returned to my room. I shook down my hair, which was loosely twisted up, and tried to dress it after my old fashion, but the little short ends sprang away from the brush, and curled in obstinate rings on my forehead. The scar still remained, so a cap was a necessity, and Kitty had made me two or three, each one more coquettish than the last. As for my dress, I had purchased a decent plain black cashmere, ready-made, before leaving the hospital, but the fit had proved such a failure that Kitty the day before had recklessly ripped off neck-band and sleeves to remodel, and there they lay still, ghastly with white tacking threads. I had nothing else to wear but my dressing-gown, unless I donned once more the black plush tea-gown, as I was forced to do at last.

It was not Elizabeth Margison that looked at me from the glass, and it never would be again. The old days had gone, and the old self. In a fit of terrified despair I wrenched the wedding-ring from my finger and threw it away, and then had the mortification of being obliged to hunt for it diligently when I remembered the need of keeping up appearances in my landlady's eyes to the last moment.

It was eleven o'clock before I entered our sitting-room. I found it in gala trim, and my landlady bustling about putting final touches to the luncheon-table.

"I beg your pardon, ma'am. I did not expect you would come down for the next hour or so. I hope you will excuse my having laid luncheon. Saturday is such

a busy morning, and the girl has gone out."

"But you need not have laid it at all for me. Don't you know that Miss Magrath has gone away till Monday? Did she not tell you?" I asked in surprise, looking at the four little pyramids of white napkin, and the many-sized glasses beside each place.

"Dear, dear! neither Miss Magrath nor Dr. Millar? I must have quite misunderstood. And I thought Colonel Fortescue might be here, too. Well, I suppose I may leave it now," she said confusedly, half-laughing.

Too languid to object or to speculate on her odd manner, I sank silently into my great chair by the fire and took up a book, thinking how little likely it was that Colonel Fortescue would ever break bread in charity with me from henceforth. I constrained myself to read two lines of my book—something about the beauty of drudgery, the joy of self-effacement. I laughed in bitter mockery, and threw it down. I should be able practically to realise both within the next few days. The prospect was not alluring. Half-past eleven! How the minutes were flying as I sat brooding there! Mrs. Brent had finished her work now, and was giving a last touch to the fruit in her best old Crown Derby dessert-service—some splendid black grapes and late golden plums. What was Kitty about? Those flowers, too, were hothouse ones.

"Where do all those come from?" I demanded at last.

"The fruit and flowers? Oh, they come from a shop I deal at. I get them for next to nothing," she replied demurely, but with a secret smile.

There was confectionery, too, pink and white, and French bonbons. She looked admiringly at the result of her labours, then drew the table aside into the recess of a window till it should be required, touched the fire artistically, adjusted the blinds, and left me to myself. I wished she had stayed.

Now the minutes began to lag as I sat counting them. I had brought into the room the parcel of Mrs. Vernon's papers, which I meant to deliver to Colonel Fortescue, and in a box carefully sealed

the rings she had worn, addressed to Muriel. The locket I wore; I intended to give that back to him. I had spent some hours of the night and early morning arranging my few possessions, taking from Mrs. Vernon's stores just what I should actually need for the next day or two—I thought I might lawfully go so far—and leaving all the rest untouched. I had bought a bonnet and a heavy plain cloak yesterday, to Kitty's wrathful indignation, and left them in readiness in my room. Directly Colonel Fortescue left, it was my intention to finish putting up my things, settle with Mrs. Brent, paying for the rooms for as long as Kitty might want them, and go.

I might find some quiet corner in which to lie hidden while I sought for work. I would beseech Kitty not to try and find me; perhaps in some day to come—Twelve! I refused to count the strokes, and fixed my mind intently on the letter I would write to Kitty, on the advertisement I ought to insert, the possible salary I might obtain, the rustiness of my poor little stock of accomplishments. Was that the sound of the street door opening and closing? I wouldn't listen. My accomplishments, save the mark! Perhaps all memory of them had faded during my illness—gone with my physical strength, my self-control. That footstep in the passage! I trembled from head to foot. My head drooped, and I could not raise it. I was incapable of giving word or sign. Then I made one desperate struggle to overcome my weakness, to speak, to rise and see who had entered; but I was prevented.

There came a sudden rush of light footsteps across the floor, the rustle of a dress. Some one dropping on her knees beside my chair flung her arms around me, and my lips were closed with a shower of warm kisses.

"Oh, my own, own, own dear mother; I've got you safe at last!" cried a sweet girlish voice in my ear.

A lovely little face was thrown back to gaze more fully into mine; two great flashing grey eyes laughed at me through a mist of tears, and a fresh little rosebud of a mouth was put up for another and yet another kiss.

"Mother, dear, don't you know me? I'm Muriel!"

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MISS LATIMER OF BRYANS.

BY ELEANOR C. PRICE.

Author of "Alexia," "Red Towers," "The Little One," etc.

CHAPTER XIII. NEWS FOR BRYANS.

THE artist stooped forward over his sketch, really to hide any sign of satisfaction at the Rector's words, seemingly to alter a touch here and there. He was still stooping over it while Mr. Cantillon walked to the fire, shook hands with Mr. Farrant, and sat down in his usual place opposite to him.

Geoffrey did not move or look up for the next minute or two. Maggie took her own little chair in the middle of the room, not sorry to sit at her ease and hold her head as she liked.

"Have you been walking far, Mr. Cantillon?" she said. "Are you too near the fire? I think it's an awfully hot day."

"Yes—no, not very," said the Rector, with unaccustomed vagueness.

It struck Geoffrey, through his other thoughts, that he had never heard a tone of voice in speaking quite like hers. It was low, only just above her breath, and strangely refined, and the sensation of it was like stroking a bird's feather or a piece of soft velvet. Her hair and eyes, the whole effect of her in fact, had this curious suggestion of softness. Feathers and velvet? Yes. But what was he touching now? Something more like red-hot iron, or ice unbearably cold.

"I have brought some news," the Rector began, with some slight hesitation in his words. He looked at the girl, away from the hawk-like eyes of the old man. He felt sorry for the half-developed

creature, about to lose—it was only too likely—the one good influence that was moulding her. He wished to say what he had to say as gently as possible, not at all knowing how Maggie would take it, and suddenly afraid of a scene. "But perhaps you have heard? Miss Latimer has written to you?"

"Poppy, do you mean? No!"

"She has not had time, of course," said Mr. Cantillon. "It was only settled, I think, two days ago."

He felt quite uncomfortable, and afraid of the sound of his own voice. He had the strongest, strangest impression that he was going to give a very serious shock. He thought that he had had no idea of the girl's extreme sensitiveness; and after all, what he saw in her attitude and her eyes was more like extreme curiosity.

"Do, do tell us!" she murmured. "Or shall I guess? Poppy is going to be married."

Mr. Cantillon bowed his head. He moved his lips in the form of "yes" but hardly pronounced the word, and there was a moment of dead silence. It was evident, however, that he need not have feared telling Maggie Farrant of this coming change in her friend's life. The girl was smiling, wondering, thinking; Heaven knows what visions of the future were flying through her ambitious young head. She looked anything but unhappy, and this being the case, the Rector was angry with his own nervousness, which continued in an unreasonable manner. Even his hand trembled as it lay on his knee.

"And who's the new Squire?" began the old man in the corner, in rasping tones. "Because half a loaf's a precious deal worse than no bread, let me tell you."

"I'll guess again," exclaimed Maggie, springing to her feet. "There, you know, grandfather, it can only be one person. Mr. Nugent, of course; the one that isn't married already. She said in her last letter what a nice large party they were. Am I right?"

"You are right, Miss Maggie," said the Rector, without any enthusiasm.

"Oh, it is wonderful news! What fun! I am glad, aren't you? Is he good enough for her? What is he like? Has anybody seen him? Mr. Thorne, of course. Oh, tell us, won't you?"

Geoffrey, who had till now been bending over his sketch, and effectually spoiling it with a number of new touches, got up and came forward.

"I can't, indeed. I hardly saw him," he said. "Good-bye, Miss Farrant. I must go—I have remembered an engagement. Good-bye, Mr. Farrant. Good-bye, sir."

There was no remonstrating with such cool and resolute haste. Only the Rector, rising politely from his chair, looked with discerning, puzzled eyes into the young man's face, and thought of it afterwards. In another moment the door had closed behind him.

"For conceit and irritability, give me an artist," remarked Mr. Farrant. "If he and his confounded drawing are not the cynosure of neighbouring eyes the fat's in the fire on the spot. Let him go, Maggie. If he wants to finish your phiz, my dear, he'll come back. Well, now, Rector, about this new young man?"

"I am still more in the dark than Mr. Thorne," was the reply, "for I have never seen Captain Nugent. However, Miss Latimer seems pleased. His mother, Mrs. Nugent, is an old friend of hers."

"Ah! You mean Miss Fanny," said the old man.

With all the correctness of his ideas, it was always a vexation to the Rector that Fanny should have been dethroned when her niece grew up. It was right, he knew, that Porphyria should be the one and only Miss Latimer. He would have been angry with any one who had not given her her proper rank, and yet such a correction as old Farrant's was apt to make him more angry still. However, this anomaly, as it seemed to him, was not to last long now; and indeed he hoped the time was coming when there would be no such person as a Miss Latimer of Bryans.

Maggie went on with her soft chatter,

wondering this and wondering that, hoping for a letter soon, asking questions which the Rector could not answer. He very soon took his leave, saying to her with a smile, as she wished him good-bye in the passage:

"I quite think the next post will tell you all you want to know."

"Ah, yes; but I want much more than a letter," the girl said. "I want her, my sweet, beautiful Poppy. Mr. Cantillon, don't you think there is nobody like her in the whole world? I am not afraid Captain Nugent will make her forget me. You don't think he will, do you?"

"No, I don't think he will," the Rector said. "She is a noble person, with a constant nature."

He walked quickly away, turning his steps towards the Court avenue. One of the many things that grated on him at Bryans was to hear this girl talk of her friend, so immeasurably her superior, by her father's old pet name of Poppy. It was true that this name was more or less used by everybody who, from the Squire downwards, found Porphyria unpronounceable. He said it was indigestible, and never quite forgave his old friend for suggesting it. It suited her on her most inaccessible side, there was no doubt. After all, it hardly seemed a possible name on Maggie Farrant's lips; and it was Poppy's own fault if this girl called her by her Christian name at all.

But the Rector had not walked a dozen yards, turning the corner under the frowning wall of the old house, and going down the narrow, grass-grown lane, seldom traversed, which skirted the Court grounds on this side, before he had forgotten all about Maggie and her failings. In truth, he was thinking with deep interest of a newly discovered parishioner. It really seemed to him strange that he should have been so right, yet so mistaken. He had been wrong about the girl; his news was no shock at all to her. But no one who had ever observed human faces and human nature could have failed to notice the extraordinary change in that young man. Mr. Cantillon was rather given to sudden, almost feminine fancies about people, and the fact was that seldom during the course of his life at Bryans, or even in former days at Oxford, where young men were a daily study, had he seen a face that interested and pleased him as Geoffrey Thorne's did. He had seen frankness and simplicity in every line of it, and a simple-minded love

of art. He liked the way in which the bright dark eyes looked at him; he liked the strength and ease of the young fellow's figure and bearing. Fanny Latimer, writing from Herzheim a fortnight before, had mentioned him and his drawings in rather a casual, slighting way, with some remark, by no means original, on the smallness of the world. She had also said, however, that she hoped he might see something of him, and that he certainly was a credit to old Thorne of Sutton Bryans. The Rector did not often make that pilgrimage across the fields, and he did not find the Thornes an attractive family. But he had not forgotten, though in the depths of his heart he dreaded to meet a third-rate artist, not at all doubting Fanny's opinion on that subject.

It had been a relief and a surprise, that afternoon, to find that young Thorne was both manly and good-looking; that his drawing, too, was not to be despised—for the likeness of Maggie Farrant, as he had sketched it, was by no means a failure. But what occupied the Rector now was the young fellow's face as he said good-bye, the frown and stoop—evidently unconscious—with which he launched himself out of the room. His bright eyes were clouded, his clear brown skin looked almost grey. It was too plain to any one with eyes that the news of Miss Latimer's engagement was a tremendous shock to this unfortunate young man. The Rector was frowning now at the thought of it, as he walked along; he pursed up his lips and tapped the ground nervously with his stick.

"Poppy, Poppy, my dear, what have you been doing?" he said to himself. "I'm afraid we have a case here, do you know—a hopeless case. I am, indeed. Ah! there could not be a greater misfortune for a poor man. After all, the poor chap cannot be very wise. It is impossible that she should have given him any reason—intentionally, I mean. Quite impossible. There is nothing of Lady Clara Vere de Vere in Poppy—Heaven bless her! More likely that this fellow had made up a romance for himself—admiration of her beauty, and so forth. Dear me! He must be tolerably lonely at Sutton. No sympathy in that household, I fancy—too refined for his surroundings. Well, if I'm right, as I fear, he must get over it. And he will, for he's a manly fellow, with a good, sweet face. Never saw a face I liked better. Mr. Geoffrey Thorne, my

dear sir, I could wish you were in somebody else's shoes."

The next soliloquy was something like this:

"I wish I had known what I was doing—wasting my anxiety on that selfish little minx. Very odd, that I distinctly felt that there was something wrong—somebody to be hurt in the room. Never was so nervous in my life. Was it magnetism, or hypnotism, or thought-reading, or what? Something uncanny. However, he had to hear it from some one."

In the course of these thoughts and mutterings the Rector had turned in at a little green gate which led into a winding, mossy walk under spreading beech-trees, and they occupied him all the way through the soft flickering shade. The boughs above his head were here and there already starred with a few flame-coloured leaves, the first sparks of the great fire which in a few weeks more was to blaze all round Bryans. The path did not go directly towards the house, but aloped a little way from it, opening suddenly on the park from the beech-wood, not more than fifty yards above the grey stone bridge of one wide arch which broke the avenue here. On the opposite side of the river this avenue, all of stately beeches, led uphill in a straight line southward, till it came to the great iron gates, the gilded points and flourishes of which caught stray flashes of the sun. The full sunlight came pouring over the opposite woods, which were bronzed and gilded by it, straight into the Rector's eyes as he stood in a break of the trees. He was accustomed to linger at this point, finding that it had a peculiar beauty of its own; but to-day the light was too dazzling, and his mind was hardly free enough for the love of the trees to have its full power over him. He turned at once up that half of the avenue which mounted from the river, walking on the broad green sward, on which the rows of beeches stood back and apart in their stately dignity.

A short and rather steep hill ended in a ditch and a low wall, rising in the middle to high stone gate-posts with griffins sitting on them, and another pair of iron and gilded gates. These led into a flat square court gorgeous with flower-beds, with an old sundial in the middle of it, an ivied wall to the west, shutting out kitchen-gardens, and lovely slopes of green velvet turf to the east, with groups of trees and shrubs, and borders of roses,

leading on to a terraced flower-garden. The house stood on a high terrace above the court, with a double flight of steps, like those of a French house, leading up to it. The terrace sloped away to the court at both ends, and was wide enough for a carriage to drive up and turn.

The house itself had not the beauty of its gardens and its avenue. It was early Georgian, large, square, and built of stone. It looked both stately and comfortable; but there was nothing to break the lines of old-fashioned windows, or the brown-grey spaces of solid wall. It had been a tradition in the family that no ivy or other interlopers were to be allowed to grow on what was considered the best-built house in the county.

Most of the windows were shut up now, and the Rector glanced at them rather sadly, as he crossed the court, mounted the steps, and rang the bell at the front door. There was a chorus of barking from distant yards. He was let in immediately by Mrs. Arch herself, who from some commanding point had seen the slight, small figure coming up the hill, his hat shining, his coat-tails waving a little in a breeze which had sprung up, and the spot of bright colour in his buttonhole.

She received him politely, and asked him to come into the drawing-room; the garden windows were open, she said. But Mr. Cantillon disliked the drawing-room at all times, and he now preferred sitting down in the hall, which he liked even in an unfurnished state, for it had a very pretty marble floor in patterns of black and white, and some beautiful old wood-carving over the chimneypiece.

Mrs. Arch was a tall and large woman, with an immovable face which generally frightened strangers. In spite of being the most faithful of servants and the most high-principled of women, she was by no means a general favourite. Even the Rector did not love Mrs. Arch, for she was not a very good churchwoman, and with all his tolerant gentleness, his opinions on some points were strong. Her influence was very great, both at the Court and in the village, and it was not always used in an orthodox direction. Poppy's father used to call her "the arch-everything," and Poppy herself revived the old joke sometimes, saying that nothing could be done at Bryans without her knowledge and consent. It seemed a responsible post to bring such news to such a woman, and the Rector felt himself

hardly prepared with the right thing to say. He need not, however, have worried himself at all on the subject. Looking anxiously at Mrs. Arch, he saw that her eyes were red and shining, and that her whole large face trembled between a smile and a sob.

"Mrs. Arch," he said, "I came here to tell you something. Miss Frances asked me to tell you—but now I cannot help thinking that you know it already."

"Well, sir," said Mrs. Arch, "please to think whether it's likely that my young lady would let me hear such news from any one but herself."

"No, certainly it is not. Then she has written to you?"

"I had a letter this morning." The housekeeper held it up before him. "I've mentioned it to no one, for these things they do get spread so, that lightning is nothing to it. Russian scandal, sir, as I heard you call it one day. English scandal is just as bad to my mind, or rather worse. But I suppose there is no reason why all Bryans shouldn't know."

"On the contrary," said Mr. Cantillon. "I was asked to tell the principal people, and so I came to you. Do sit down, Mrs. Arch; this is very wonderful news, and I should like to hear how you feel about it."

"Thank you, sir, I'm not one to talk about my feelings. I mostly keep things to myself and don't show nothing outwardly. But I must confess that to-day I've had no rest and been able to settle down to nothing. Dear Miss Poppy knew I should be upset, and no doubt she thought my old heart would set itself to fearing all kinds of changes. So she says, 'Never mind, dear old Arch.' I can't show you her letter, sir, if you'll excuse me—no human eyes shall see it except my own—but she says Captain Nugent will only be a new friend for me, and I'm still to be arch-cook and arch-housemaid, and——"

The housekeeper bowed her face upon Poppy's letter and burst into sobs and tears. They lasted for some time, though now and then she lifted up her head to pour out blessings on Poppy, and prayers that she might be happy in her future life. Her face was very grotesque at these moments, and the Rector tried hard not to look at her. He did not really feel inclined to laugh at the poor woman. It touched him, indeed, to see the stern and immovable Arch so affected, and he was even conscious of a little sympathetic feel-

ing about his own throat and eyes. He waited very patiently, tracing careful patterns with his stick upon the floor. At last Mrs. Arch was able to speak again, and she began in a deeply lugubrious tone.

"It's not that I fear any change, sir, as I'm sure you understand. Besides, a new master never is the same as a new mistress. If Miss Poppy was a young gentleman, going to bring home a new young lady, then we old servants might shake in our shoes and nobody have a right to blame us. It's not that. It's only that every change is a trial, and men do deceive so, begging your pardon, that I can't help feeling the risk she will be running. She, the most innocent, unsuspecting, unable to think evil—scarce perhaps knowing it when she sees it—and Lord bless you, to have only known him a fortnight! Don't it seem to you alarming, sir? But perhaps you know something about him!"

"I only know that Miss Frances has known his family for years, and that his mother is a great friend of hers. That is a recommendation," said the Rector cheerfully, if not quite honestly. "I have never seen the young man himself. I knew his brother a little, but—well, I believe they are not at all alike. I have no reason to think otherwise than well of Captain Nugent. We can hardly dare hope, perhaps, that we shall think him quite worthy of her. But we must trust her discernment, Mrs. Arch. Her friends are generally the right sort of people—don't you think so?"

He stretched out his hand for his hat, feeling impatient to be gone. A gasp from Mrs. Arch made him fear another fit of crying.

"Well, as to that, I don't know," she said dismally.

And the Rector, considering his words, was not sure that he knew either.

After all, he lingered for a long time at the door in the sunshine, talking to Mrs. Arch so kindly, with such thorough sympathy, that they were better friends for ever afterwards.

"There, let us hope for the best," he said, as he shook hands with her. "Take my advice: have an extra good cup of tea and go to bed early. You will want all your energies soon, remember."

Mrs. Arch smiled—a rare performance with her—and stood looking after him, tears running down her face now and then, till he was lost to sight in the shade of the avenue.

A HORNED PEOPLE.

TOWARDS the Burmese borders of China, but yet within the nominal area of the great province of Szechuan, is a tract of about eleven thousand square miles of almost unknown country, inhabited by a curious people, whose origin and history are totally unknown. The Chinese name of this territory is Liang-Shan—the Great Ridge Mountains—but it is familiarly called by travellers Lolodom. It is peopled by the independent Lolos, of whom one frequently finds mention in books of travel in Western China, but little or nothing in the way of description. Marco Polo seems to have passed its borders in traversing what he calls the district of Cain-du, described as a fertile country containing many towns and villages, and inhabited by "a very immoral population." But no one enters Lolodom without a special permit from the Lolos.

Their land is framed in by mountains, through which a deep gully leads from the Chinese Prefecture of Chien-Chang—Marco Polo's Cain-du. The passage of this gully is barred by a river, which no Chinaman is allowed to cross until he finds bail for his good conduct in Lolodom. The Lolos themselves swim or wade across, and swing themselves up the opposite bank by means of a rope. The Chinese traders, who go into the country with proper protection, are said to make great profits there, the Lolos being simple and conscientious, but very resentful of trickery and bad faith.

No European traveller has seen so much of, and has gathered so much information about the Lolos as Mr. Colborne Baber; but unfortunately his extremely interesting notes are buried from the general reader among the Supplementary Papers of the Royal Geographical Society. To these notes we are largely indebted in the preparation of this article.

Whence the Lolos came and when, no man knows; but as it has been discovered that they have a written language of their own, it is possible that some solution of the mystery may be found hereafter. The name "Lolo" itself is of unknown Chinese origin, and is a term of insult which the Lolos do not recognise. They call themselves variously "Lo-su," "No-su," and "Le-su," or generically "I-chia"—namely, tribes or families of I. They are not an autonomous people, and their tribes

seem to be frequently at variance with each other.

They are a tall and well-made race—far taller than the Chinese, and than any European people. Mr. Baber saw hundreds of them, but never one who could be called under-sized. They are slim and muscular, with the deep chests of natural mountaineers—indeed, their speed and endurance in mountain-climbing is a proverb among the Chinese. They have handsome oval faces of a reddish-brown hue, prominent cheek-bones, arched and rather broad noses, thinnish lips, large eyes, and pointed chins, from which the beard is carefully plucked. A curious characteristic is a tendency to wrinkles, especially on the forehead.

The great marked physical peculiarity of the Lolo, however, is the horn. Each male adult gathers his hair into a knot over his forehead, and then twists it up in a cotton cloth so as to resemble the horn of a unicorn. This horn, which is sometimes as much as nine inches long, is regarded as sacred, and even when a Lolo, on settling in Chinese territory, grows a pigtail, he still carefully preserves his horn under his head-cover.

The women are remarkably graceful, and as modest in their demeanour as the Sifan tribes—the immoral people referred to by Marco Polo—are the reverse. The young ones are described as “joyous, timid, natural, open-aired, neatly dressed, bare-footed, honest girls, devoid of all the purulent mock-modesty of the club-footed Chinese women—damsels with whom one would like to be on brotherly terms.

Mr. Baber gives a pleasant picture of them: “Several of them, natives of the vicinity of Yuch-hai, came to peep at me in the verandah of the inn, their arms twined round one another’s necks; tall, graceful creatures, with faces much whiter than their brothers. They did not understand Chinese, and scampered away when I made bold to address them. But a sturdy Lolo lord of creation, six feet two high, whose goodwill I had engaged by simple words, went out and fetched two armfuls of them—about half-a-dozen. It would have been unkind to presume upon this rather constrained introduction, especially as they were too timid to speak, so I dismissed the fair audience with all decorous expedition. Their hair was twined into two tails and wound round their heads; they wore jackets, and flounced and pleated petticoats, covered

with an apron, and reaching to the ground.”

The principal garment of a Lolo man is a capacious sleeveless mantle of grey or black felt, tied round the neck and falling nearly to the heels. The richer Lolos have this mantle of a very fine felt, highly esteemed by the Chinese, with a fringe of cotton web round the lower border. On horseback they wear a cloak of similar material split half-way up the back, and a lappet to cover the opening. In summer, cotton is sometimes substituted for felt as material for the mantle and cloak. The trousers are of Chinese cotton, with felt bandages. The Lolo wears no shoes, but for head-covering he has a low conical hat of woven bamboo, covered with felt, which serves also as an umbrella. Thus incased in felt, he is proof against both wind and rain.

There appear to be two broad classes of Lolos, called respectively—in Chinese equivalents—“Black-bones,” and “White-bones.” The former name is used by the Chinese to indicate the independent tribes—as distinguished from those on the frontiers, more or less subject to the Imperial Government—but among the Lolos themselves a Black-bone is a noble, and the word is thus somewhat analogous to our own “blue blood.” The White-bones are the plebeians, the vassals and retainers of the Black-bones. A third class exists in Lolodom, called “Wa-tzu,” who are practically slaves—captive Chinese and their descendants. It is said that those born in Lolodom are treated with more consideration than those brought in by fresh forays. Some who have escaped have admitted that they were not unkindly treated, and were not overworked. The captives are tattooed on the forehead with the mark of the tribe, and if they are recalcitrant are flogged with nettles, but when docile are made comfortable, and their children are admitted to all the privileges of Lolo children.

There is, however, no intermarriage. No Lolo will marry except with a woman of his own tribe, and although Chinese women are sometimes captured, they are taken as wives for Chinese bondmen, not for Lolos.

The marriage of a Black-bone is a time of high festivity, with *al fresco* banquets. When the feast is over the bride goes home with her friends, but it is only after a third banquet that the marriage takes place. An interchange of presents then follows, and

the betrothal is ratified by the present from the husband's to the bride's family of a pig and three vessels of wine. On the wedding morning the friends of the bride gather round her, and the bridesmaids chant a song somewhat to this effect:

"In spite of all the affection and care your fend parents have lavished upon you since the day you were born, you must now desert them. Never again will you sit beside them at work or at meals. You will not be nigh to support them when they grow old, nor to tend them when they fall sick. You must leave them and go away to the house of a stranger."

To this dispiriting theme the bride chants, as well as her tears will allow:

"Leave them I must, but not by my desire or fault. They must bear with my absence; my brothers and sisters will support them. I go to my husband, and my duty will be to help his parents, not alas! my own. But if any trouble befall my dear father and mother, I shall pine to death; I am sure I shall. Seldom can I visit them; but when they are sick let them send for me and I will come—I will come!"

The strain may be varied and indefinitely prolonged, but the theme is the same—the sorrow of leave-taking and filial affection. Then the bride is dressed in rich garments and ornaments, and a new song is raised, the theme of which is fear that the bridegroom and his friends may not be kind to the departing loved one. Weeping is plentiful, till the tide of sorrow is checked by the arrival of the groom's male relatives and friends, who dash into the throng, seize the bride, place her on the shoulders of the "best man," carry her out of doors, clap her on horseback, and then gallop off with her to her new home.

Meanwhile, the bridesmaids and their friends make a feint of detaining her, and belabour the attacking party with thorn-branches, or smother them in showers of flour and wood-ashes. Arrived at her new home, the bride finds a house, horses, cattle and sheep provided by the groom's family, while her own parents send clothes, ornaments, and corn. The Lolos, it is said, live in good stone houses, and have fine broad roads between their villages.

A queer marriage ceremony is reported of some of the tribes, but whether a serious one or only part of the fun of the event does not appear. The parents of the bride place her on an upper branch of some

large tree, while the older ladies of the family are perched on the lower branches. The bridegroom has to climb up the trunk for his bride, and she does not become his until he touches her foot, an act which the women endeavour, or profess to endeavour, to prevent, by striking at him and shoving him in all directions.

The birth of a girl is regarded as a more fortuitous event than the arrival of a boy—proof that the women occupy a high position among the Lolos. Indeed, a woman-chief is not unknown among the tribes.

Mr. Baber advises any one who would enter the Lolo country to secure a female guide, under whose protection his person and property will be held sacred. Such a guide will put on an extra petticoat before beginning the journey, and if any molestation is threatened, will take off that garment and spread it solemnly on the ground. There it will remain until the outrage has been condoned, and the ground on which it lies is inviolable until the neighbouring chiefs have punished the offenders and done justice to the convoy.

The women also take part in battles, but are not assailed by male warriors so long as they do not use cutting weapons.

When a boy is born he is first washed in cold water, and then baptized on the forehead with cow-dung, to make him strong and courageous.

The Lolos are not Buddhists, and it is not easy to classify their religion. It is dominated by medicine-men, who are also the scribes, and who are held in great reverence. The deities are consulted by throwing sticks in the air and noting the positions in which they fall, or by burning bones and drawing auguries from the marks produced by calcination. To avert evil influences, feathers inserted in a split bamboo are put on the roof of a house, much like the old horse-shoe on the barn-door in our own country. When a disaster is threatened, sheep or cattle are slaughtered as a sort of propitiatory sacrifice.

They have also trial by ordeal in a curious fashion. If anything has been stolen, and the thief has not been discovered, all the people of the place are summoned by the medicine-man and compelled each to masticate a handful of raw rice. When the mess is ejected, a stain of blood on the mouthful betrays the delinquent, as the gums of the guilty are sure to bleed!

The Lolos compare the world to an open hand. The thumb, well stretched out, represents foreigners; the forefinger, themselves; the middle finger, the Mohammedans; the third finger, the Chinese; and the little finger the Tartars. They seem to have three deities—Lui-wo, A-pu-ko, and Shua-shê-po—but we are ignorant of the attributes of each. They all dwell in the sacred Mount of the Buddhists, however, Mount O-mi, which is curious, and the greatest of the three is Lui-wo.

They say that they get woollen cloths from Chien-Chang, and other goods from "beyond Thibet"—query, Russia. They have a tradition of a European who visited them some fifty years ago. This was probably a French missionary. Another Frenchman was captured during a Lolo foray near Yung-Shan, in 1860. He recorded his dismal experiences in the "*Annales de la Propagation de la Foi*." Only he speaks of his captors as Mantzu, and as very rough customers indeed.

Mr. Baber says that the free-hearted manner of the Lolos is very attractive, and that they are inclined to regard Europeans as distant kinsmen. He is satisfied that a European could travel from end to end of Lolodom with perfect security, if only he was furnished with the proper credentials. A strict watch is kept all along the frontiers, and all suspicious persons are rigorously excluded.

The Lolos get the blame of many outrages which are really committed by bands of Chinese outlaws which infest the borders of Lolodom. But they do make periodical forays in a very determined manner. When they project an invasion of Chinese territory, after the manner of the Scottish Borderers, the Black-bones send heralds some months in advance to announce their intention. The Chinese officials never molest these emissaries, as they know that terrible reprisals would follow, but take the hint and remove themselves to a safe distance.

When the time comes—usually in early winter—the Lolo warriors issue forth, cross the Gold River in light coracles—all they carry with them—and proceed to lay hands on what goods and chattels they can find. They do not kill anybody who submits and offers to provide a ransom, nor do they make captives of old persons; but young men and women, cattle and salt, they carry off wholesale, and if resistance is offered they destroy all the growing crops. Resistance, however, is seldom offered by the

country people, and the Chinese guard are usually like the proverbial policeman when a row occurs.

The Lolos do not use firearms, but cross-bows and long twenty-four foot spears headed with spikes four or five inches long. The prisoners may be ransomed, but the price is a higher one than the ordinary country folk can raise. Mr. Baber met a woman who had been ransomed for the equivalent of five pounds—a terribly large sum in those parts. The captives, as a rule, remain as slaves; and it marks a curious condition of affairs in the great Chinese Empire that, within the nominal boundaries of one of its largest and richest provinces, thousands of its subjects live at the mercy of a nation of slave hunters. The frontiers, at almost any point of which the slave hunts may take place, extend for quite three hundred miles within the area of China proper.

The Lolos certainly possess books, and Mr. Baber was able to procure transcripts of some of their writings. They have not yet been interpreted, we believe; but the characters have been identified as phonetic, and as bearing some affinities to writings found in Sumatra.

It should be mentioned that the term Lé-su, or a variant of it, is frequently found among Indo-China tribes, widely separated from each other by distance and everything else. The Abbé Desgodins refers to a people he calls "Lissou," inhabiting the country immediately to the south of Thibet, speaking a language quite different from the surrounding tribes, and having a very independent character. In the journal of the Sladen Mission there is mention of a people called Lee-saus, who are supposed to be identical with the Lei-su encountered on the Thibetan borders. And a great similarity has been shown between the language of those Lee-saus and the Burmese.

Is it possible that there is any connection between the Lolos and the Burmese tribes by Karens, who have so mysterious a history, and whose legends seem to point almost to a European origin? This is a matter for ethnologists to investigate; but it is clear that a great deal more information is needed about the remarkable inhabitants of Lolodom, of whom we have endeavoured to present a sketch from the very scanty materials available.

Mr. Hosie, who encountered some Lolos on his journey in Western China, says that the women might, without any stretch of

imagination, have been taken for Italian peasant women. He also saw the place, near Yueh-hsi, where, a few years ago, a Chinese army of five thousand men had entered Lolodom to punish the Black-bones and possess the land; but not a man of them ever returned! Truly Lolodom enshrines a great human mystery.

THE BEND OF THE ROAD.

A COMPLETE STORY.

AN old man leaning over a gate at sunset. In the background a farmhouse and buildings surrounded by meadows; in the foreground a white, dusty, country road.

This was the picture presented to my eye—the picture round which the story is written.

He was a tall old man, and his frame, bent as it was, must have been exceptionally powerful in its day; but now there was an appearance of weakness pervading the entire personality. The hand that clutched the gate-post was a feeble one; the face, with its look of patient expectancy, was very wan and drawn, though it might be more by sickness than age, and the eyes that were bent upon the winding road before them were dim as though the light were fast departing from them.

His eyes were bent upon the road, the dusty whiteness of which was unsullied except by the presence of my own sombre, travel-stained figure, for I was on my way to the village which lay beyond, round the bend of the road, but there was something in the solitary form before me that caused me to slacken my pace until I was almost at a standstill.

I noticed that the old man's weak gaze seemed to be fixed upon just this same bend of the road, and from something in his attitude and expression I judged him to be waiting for some one whom he expected to come from this direction. In accordance with the custom of the country I wished him "good evening."

He answered back in a weak, quavering voice, which seemed little in accordance with the massive frame to which it belonged.

"Good evenin' to ye, sir."

I was about to hazard some other remark—such as it being fine weather for the crops—when the old man suddenly became violently agitated. His gaze,

which, for a brief instant while I spoke, had been diverted from that particular spot upon which it had been fixed, returned thither, and was now riveted upon some approaching object which, though some distance off, was yet perceptible even to his dimmed vision.

"Look, Maggy, look!" he cried, in trembling eagerness, "see there, at th' bend o' th' road! I can see summat red like."

And he pointed with a shaking finger.

I have spoken of the old man's solitary figure—and so it had at first appeared—but now, as he uttered these words, I was aware of that of a woman a little way behind him, which I had previously overlooked. She now came forward, and bending over the gate beside the old man looked down the road. She was young—quite a girl—and her face, so far as I could see it under the penthouse of sun-bonnet, was pretty after a pale, pathetic style, but from something in her dress and manner I judged her to be somewhat lower in station than the old man. The hand with which she shaded her eyes as she looked down the road was red and roughened by hard work, and yet in her eyes I thought I saw the same expression of patient waiting and expectancy which I had read in those of him who had addressed her as "Maggy."

"Look, Maggy, look!" the latter cried again. "It's comin' nearer. Is it some'un in a red coat, think ye?"

And his excitement was so great that he was obliged to cling to the gate-post for support.

The young woman gazed for a moment down the road, and the hand that shaded her eyes from the rays of the setting sun trembled. Then she turned to the old man, and I fancied I heard the ghost of a sigh as she answered him, as one would answer a child.

"No, daddy, no, not this time. 'Tis only Farmer Drake's wife in her red shawl drivin' home from market."

The old man's excitement died out as rapidly as it had kindled, and his face took upon it its former look of pathetic patience as he quavered out:

"Ay, Maggy, lass, ye're right, ye're allers right; but he's sure to come soon. If not to-day, to-morrer or maybe next day."

Then his eyes fell upon me again, as, impelled by some feeling of mingled sympathy and curiosity evoked by the little

scene I had just witnessed, I had lingered by the gate.

"We're a-watchin' fur our Joe," he explained with a feeble smile as he uttered the name. "He's bin in furrin parts but he's comin' home now; eh, Maggy?"

"Yes, daddy," she answered, with a faint smile like his own, and a note of cheerfulness—feigned or otherwise—in her voice, "he's comin' home—soon."

I bade them both, the old man and—for so I judged her to be by her addressing him as "daddy"—his daughter, "good evening," and left them. Before I had gone far I encountered the very woman in the red shawl, the delusive appearance of which had, it appeared, raised false hopes in at least one breast. She was driving a cart from which came the cackle of poultry, and presented a perfect embodiment of rural prosperity; and yet I felt, vaguely, that I owed her a grudge for being herself instead of some one else.

When I, too, reached the bend of the road, round which the village lay, I looked back.

The sun had gone down and a coldness had fallen upon the landscape, but I fancied that I could still see the two waiting figures at the gate.

I remained some days at the village and made the acquaintance of the clergyman, who owned the living and preached two sermons per week to a drowsy and limited congregation in an old, old church, the date of which was not known to a century or so. One day I met him coming out of the very same gate over which I had seen the old man leaning while he looked down the road. Without any enquiry on my part he at once began to tell me the latter's simple story.

"I have been to see old Farmer Brett," he began, as he turned and walked with me. "At least, he is not so old in actual years, perhaps, though he has aged wonderfully since his son went away."

"His son Joe?" I questioned.

"You know him, then?"

"No," I answered; "that is—go on."

"Well, you must know his wife died some years back, and he had only this one son, Joe—a fine young fellow, over six feet, and as strong as a giant, but rather harum-scarum. There was not a bit of harm in him, though, and he was a favourite with everybody. Somehow he and his father could not hit it off together. Old Brett was rather a hard man—yes" (I suppose I had given some indication of surprise), "you would

not think it to see him now, but then he is only a wreck of his former self, and is changed in many ways—indeed, he is hardly the same man. Well, it had been his father's expressed determination, ever since Joe was a youth, that he should marry his cousin, who, when her father died, would inherit a good bit of property. All went smoothly enough at first, and it seemed that old Brett's wish was in a fair way of being accomplished, when, what does the young fellow do but fall in love, in his usual headlong, reckless manner, with the daughter of one of his father's labourers. Maggy Dale was a good girl and superior to her class, but, of course, it would be a terribly bad marriage from old Brett's point of view.

"I believe there was a terrible scene between father and son when it came to the former's ears. It ended, at any rate, in the old man ordering the young one either to give up all thought of the girl, or leave the house then and there. Joe Brett took his father at his word, left his home that very night, and has never re-entered it since.

"Weeks went by and nothing was heard of him, and his father, who had soon repented of his harshness, sought news of him in vain. At last a letter came. Joe Brett had enlisted in a regiment which was ordered on foreign service, and the letter was actually written on shipboard. In it he implored his father to forgive him, said that he would never give up Maggy, but there was a prospect of hard fighting before him, and, perhaps, when he returned, his father might have reason to be proud of him and take back some of the cruel words he had thrown at him."

The Vicar paused.

"Then that was the girl I took to be the old man's daughter since she called him daddy?"

"Yes, that is the most pathetic part of it. When the father realised that his son had gone from him, perhaps to meet his death, it brought on a fit of some kind which was followed by a long illness, which changed him from the fine stalwart man of middle age to the wreck he now is—broken in health and spirit and with but one great longing, to see his son once more, and one source of comfort, the companionship of the girl for whose sake he drove him from his door."

I told him of the scene I had myself witnessed.

"Ah, yes," was the reply, "every even-

ing, as the sun goes down, those two stand together and look down the road along which one day they hope to see the wanderer returning; for I must tell you that the regiment has been ordered home, and it is not without reason that the old man watches at the gate."

He paused for a moment before continuing.

"Only I hope if he does come he will come soon, for I fear the old man's strength is falling fast."

After this I always contrived to pass by the farmhouse at least once in the course of the day, generally towards sunset, when I was sure to see the old man and the girl, in both of whom I now began to take a strong interest, waiting at the gate. They were always standing in the same attitude and looking in the same direction, and the old man's eyes would be strained to catch the first glimpse of any approaching figure as it came into view round the bend of the road.

We used to exchange greetings, and always the old man would inform me in his feeble tones that they were looking out for "their Joe."

Sometimes, too, he would indulge in a few details.

"Our Joe, he's bin in furrin parts a-fightin' fur th' Queen. Oh, yes, he were allers a darin' one, were Joe. I mind him when he were but a bit o' a lad, he'd think nowt o' standin' up to one twice his own size. He never knowed what fear were, didn't our Joe. Ah, I guess they ain't got many like him, an' when he comes home he'll be showin' us th' medals he'll a-won, fur he were allers a famous hard hitter, an' I make no doubt he'll a-done his dooty fur his Queen an' country, an' we'll all be proud o' him, won't us, Maggy?"

It was touching to see how he always turned to the girl he had once scorned and scouted for confirmation and sympathy in everything that related to the absent one, and how he invariably recognised and proclaimed her rights by referring to him as "our Joe."

But each day that passed seemed to leave him feebler than the last, and after a time a chair had to be brought out and placed for him at the gate, where he could sit and watch the road. One evening, I remember it well, I found him sitting there, his face still turned in the old direction, and his eyes strained to catch sight of the red coat in which he fondly hoped to see his son attired, "with his sword by his side, an'

his medals on his breast, an' maybe th' boys from th' village cheerin' him."

I stopped as usual to talk with him. He struck me as looking very frail, and, with something like a pang, it was borne in upon me that unless the longed-for meeting occurred very shortly, it would never take place at all in this world. However, he was unusually hopeful. To-morrow, he told me, would be Joe's birthday. No doubt he would come to-morrow. He was—"let's see, how old is he?" And he turned to Maggy.

"Twenty-seven, daddy," she answered.

"Ay, ay, to be sure, so he were, though it were wonderful how he'd shot up. Seemed but yesterday as he were a bit o' a boy, playin' truant from school to go birdanestin' or blackberryin'. Ah, he were a limb, were Joe."

I looked at Maggy. Did she, too, entertain the hope that he would come on his birthday? If so, how was it that she looked so pale and sad? Did she find the waiting too long? Had hope deferred made her heart sick?

But the old man was speaking.

"P'raps ye'll drop in to-morrer, sir, an' see Joe? I make no doubt as he'll be here, an' I shall be up fine an' early to meet him. Maggy, too, must put on her Sunday gown, an' look her bonniest, eh, Maggy? Ye'll be wantin' to show our Joe what a fine young woman you've growed while he's bin away!"

"Yes, daddy," she answered, with the ghost of a smile flickering for an instant across her features, and then dying out.

Next morning early I was aware of a sense of commotion and pleasurable excitement abroad in the village. Little groups gathered in the roadway, and busy housewives, appearing in their doorways, shouted the tidings to each other across the street.

"Hast heard th' news? Joe Brett's come home. Maggy Dale heard stones throwed at her winder this mornin' when 'twas hardly light, an' looked out, an' there he were, with his red coat an' all, an' he waved his hand an' pointed to his father's house, as much as to say he were goin' there, an' she'd see him agen later."

It was about sundown when I passed the gate where the old man used to stand and look down the road. There was no one there now, and I easily imagined to myself the happy little group assembled together in the old homestead. I thought me of the old man's invitation to

drop in and see "our Joe." It seemed rather too soon to intrude upon them, but after a moment's hesitation I opened the gate.

"No doubt," I thought, "I shall find the young fellow no better and no worse than others of his class; but I am glad—I am very glad he has come in time, for I fear his father is going fast."

I found the door of the house ajar, and as I paused for a moment on the threshold I heard the old man's voice speaking within. The tone itself would almost have acquainted me with the good news even had it not been the common talk of the village.

"Eh, lad, but I thought as ye'd come on yer birthday—with yer red coat and yer medals, too, so grand like. But ye're only jest in time, Joe, ye're only jest in time; fur I'm goin' fast, though I can die in peace now as I've seed ye once more an' know as ye've forgave yer old father th' hard part as he acted to'rds ye."

Not willing to remain longer an involuntary eavesdropper, I pushed open the door and entered. The old man was sitting in his elbow-chair facing me. The waning light from the window at his side fell upon his face, showing it almost wax-like in its pallor, and yet irradiated by an expression of the deepest joy I had ever seen on any human countenance. Behind him, half in the shadow, was the girl Maggy. Her face was as pale as the old man's; her lips were parted, and her hands clasped convulsively as she listened to the words that fell from him. So silent and motionless was she that she appeared more like a statue than a living being.

There was no one else in the room!

Meanwhile, the old man still went on speaking.

"It would a' bin a dreadful disappointment if ye hadn't a' come to-day. Maggy an' me's bin lookin' out fur ye so long. There's never hardly bin a night as we haven't watched fur ye from th' gate, fur we knowed as ye'd come from th' village an' round th' bend o' th' road, an' we wanted to be th' fust to see ye. An' to think as ye should a' took us by surprise arter all!"

He broke off and began to pass his trembling hand up and down and round about as though feeling for something before him.

"An' it's fine ye look in yer red coat an' all. Eh, but ye'll be turnin' all th'

girls' heads an' makin' Maggy jealous;" and he laughed a feeble little laugh.

But the girl behind him uttered no word, only clasped her hands tighter, while her face gleamed ghost-like in the shadow. Neither of them took any heed of my presence; the old man, I was sure, had not even observed it. I longed to withdraw, and yet feared to disturb them by a movement. Then I heard a foot crunching the path outside. The sound released me from the spell that held me to the spot, and I turned and left the room.

As I softly closed the door I saw the Vicar coming towards me. He held a letter in his hand, and looked troubled.

"I have bad news here," he said, "very bad news. Joe Brett is dead. He died on the voyage home. This is a letter asking me to break the news to his father. However shall I do it?"

"There is no need," I said.

The old man died at daybreak. Those who were present spoke with awe of the unseen presence, visible only to the father's eye, that hovered round the deathbed. He passed away peacefully, even happily, for he went down into the Valley of Shadows hand in hand with "our Joe."

His last words were to the girl who had been wont to watch with him at the gate.

"Maggy," he whispered, "we'll wait fur ye—Joe an' me—an' we'll see ye comin' round th' bend o' th' road."

CHARLES KEENE.

IN TWO PARTS. PART II.

"SIR, the man who writes, except it be for money, is a fool."

A great writer has been credited with this mercenary maxim, and it would seem to have some influence on modern correspondents.

We live in a fast-going age, and spare but little time for letter-writing. Our great grandfathers exchanged enormous foolscap sheets to testify their friendship, and no small sums were paid for their postage. Nowadays we take to "wiring" one another to save the pains of writing, and scarce ever use the post except for purposes of business. A few old fogies may survive in some outlandish nooks and corners, who still perhaps are not instant correspondents. But the young men of the period as little dream of writing letters as they would of wearing pig-tails or of taking snuff.

Biographers in future will have little need to hunt for the letters of their heroes. A telegram or two, and some half-a-dozen postcards, perhaps, may be discoverable; but as for finding any letters, the lost books of *Livy* will as easily be found.

Old-fashioned as he was, and fond of ancient customs, it is not surprising that Keene, when far away from them, should write to his old friends, and many of his letters have been luckily preserved. Of these nearly a hundred have been added to his *Life*; and although a captious critic may object to small-beer chronicles, there are reasons for approving this addition to the book. Keene, though rather shy and silent in society, and preferring usually to listen than to speak, grew chatty and amusing when he put his thoughts on paper, and would let his pen say freely what might not have passed his lips. Thus his letters give a clearer mental portrait of the man than might have been furnished by any other means; and they are, moreover, very pleasant reading, being natural and simple; scribbled off "currente calamo," and not written for effect. The reader must not look for the elegance of *Chesterfield*, or the gossiping of *Horace Walpole*, or the drollery of *Charles Lamb*, or the brilliance of *Byron*, or the piety of *Cowper*, or the poetry of *Keats*. But these letters have a certain charm and freshness of their own; and many as there are, we may wish that there were more.

Neither books nor letters can be fairly judged from extracts; still we may make a dip or two haphazard in the postbag, which, though private for a while, lies open now before us. Here are a few words from *Witley*, Surrey, where, in the year '65, Keene rented a small cottage from his friend *Birket Foster*.

"This is a pleasant retreat to fly to for a day or two from the row and turmoil of London, and gives my friends, too, the opportunity of calling it my 'country house,' and the pleasure of making me wince by hinting at the wealth that enables me to afford such a luxury!

"It's a bosky-copsey country, very picturesque and English, with just a suggestion (compared to Scotland) of hills on the horizon (the *Hog's Back*), but from there being so many trees, when the glass does fall the rain comes down with a vengeance. Last night there was a furious gale, which kept everybody awake but me. My couch is a hammock, which wraps round me so comfortably, it's like

'poppies and mandragora.' We've a small aristocracy of artists, too, down here—*Birket Foster*, *Burton*, *Watson*, and *Jones*—and amongst our surroundings there's a good deal of fun to be picked up. That reminds me of an extract from a catalogue of a country auction down here the other day. Among the books were these two lots:

"No. 20.—Mill on Liberty.

"No. 21.—Do. on The Floss!

"They have their 'girds' at us, too. I heard of a *Belle* of the nearest town remarking of the curious manners and customs of these artists, that she had actually seen them in Society in evening dress up to the waist, and a velvetreen jerkin and any-coloured necktie a-top!"

Charles Keene, like *John Keats*, very rarely dated letters; though he sometimes marked the week-day whereon they were written, and would often add a drawing, which was better than a date. Here is, however, a morsel of a missive, most elaborately headed, "11, Queen's Road, West Chelsea, Sunday, 26th" ("April, 1874," being postmarked on the envelope). It is addressed to his friend, *Joseph Crawhall*, of *Newcastle*, to whom he was indebted for many a "Punch" subject:

"I send you a pretty little piece of music that we used to make my sister's children sing when they were little—four tiny trebles in a row in unison. Are your olive-branches young? Try it with them, and if it does not give you a pleasant goose-fleshy sensation and a lump in your throat 'it's a pity!' Have you any fancy in the canine way? I've a little German dachshund . . . quiet, affectionate little animal, always sniffing about for mice, and such small deer; I fancy just the companion for an angler. She killed a tame pigeon of ours, though, this week, when our backs were turned. That reminds me of a bulldog that a friend of mine had, that killed every cat he came across; but he had been made to understand he was to spare the family mouser, and my friend says he often sees *Tiger* staring at her, and the water running out of his mouth!"

Here is another *Crawhall* fragment written five years later:

"I thought of you the other night when I called on my friend *Haydon*. . . . He's the staunchest angler I know south of you. He lives in *Bedlam*—don't be alarmed; he is steward of that celebrated establishment, and has a house with large garden in the precincts. He had hatched, and I helped

him to bottle off, several thousand young trout to put into a stream near Powderham Castle, Devonshire. Long may it ripple on, and Coquet and the rest, unpoisoned. To parody Lord John Manners' couplet,

Let industries and manufactures die,
But leave us still our trout and salmon fry!

Passing strange, to stock a Devonshire stream with fish reared in the heart of Southwark, within stink of Bermondsey!"

To give some notion of the writer, letters ought to flow like common conversation; not phrasing with fine periods, but seeming like his usual talk. Simple as his nature was, Keene was never stiff or stilted; and though he read largely and thought deeply, he rarely let his tongue or pen be weighted by great words. It being his business to be humorous with his pencil, it became his practice to look for comical incidents, as affording proper subjects for his weekly work. So his letters often tell of funny stories he had heard, or how his quaint fantastic fancy had been stirred by real facts. Here, for instance, is a passage from a letter which extends to nearly seven pages of the *Life*—the writer elsewhere owning his preference for long letters, and frequently prolonging his "bald, disjointed chat" to even greater lengths than this. Speaking of lawn-tennis, he observes:

"You should go in for this pastime. It suits me. I like a game that stretches the muscles thoroughly, or else one of utter physical quiet, such as chess. A dawdling sort of game sends me to sleep. Billiards make me yawn. But I forgot; you are a fisherman. That's a different thing. My Irish friend says he is always in a tremble with excitement the first day he has in the year. He is married now, and says his fishing is a good deal stopped! They were in great trouble about the first baby. It could not take milk, and was a poor emaciated little bantling; but I consoled him when he told me, and congratulated him on the chance he had got—that there was no drawing at all in the ordinary fat maggot of a baby; but here was an artist blessed with a nice anatomical bony infant, such as Albert Durer and the early German masters drew from, and gave such character to their Holy Families. I believe he took the hint, as I've heard he made no end of nude studies from it; and only just in time, as they say it is fattening."

Like the good old Vicar of Wakefield,

Keene was little of a traveller; and although his annual migrations were rather more prolonged than "from the blue bed to the brown," he certainly was not of very locomotive disposition. His visits to "Tig," as he called his country place—whose proper name was Tigbourne Cottage—were varied now and then by a pleasant stay in Suffolk with his friend Edwin Edwards, or, in later years, his friend Edward Fitzgerald. Now and then, too, he enjoyed a little yachting about the Eastern Coast, which he always dearly loved, even to the length of terming Ipswich "my native town," in a letter which laments the woeful changes that he noticed there. Twice he went to Rhineland, and as far as the Black Forest, which he liked to see in spring; and he likewise went to France, once travelling in company with the present writer, who remembers very well a pleasant little dinner in a Lilliputian first-floor chamber on the Boulevard, and a monster omelette soufflée, "commanded" for two only, which quite defied the appetites of three to fairly finish.

Paris was in this case merely taken as a stepping-stone towards St. Jean de Luz, which Charles Keene far preferred to the more fashionable Biarritz, admiring the old houses clustered round the old grey church, as well as the Basque peasants, marching upright and majestic before their sluggish oxen. His first French visit, made some fifteen years before, has been immortalised in "Punch" of September, 1856, where may be seen some lifelike sketches of himself and his companions. But although enjoying his small tours abroad, he cared little to extend them, preferring an occasional sea-trip to Aberdeen, where he was ever warmly welcomed by kind northern friends of his, and where he might freely vent and vaunt his passion for the bagpipes.

Although he was by nature not a migrant, this passion, it is stated, more than once compelled him to seek a change of studio. It seized him first in Baker Street, at No. 55, whither he had moved in 1863 from the stonemason's yard in Clipstone Street. Here it was that, four years later, he first learned to cry with Keats, but with a meaning slightly different:

O bagpipe, that didst steal my heart away!

the poet's passion being that of rage, while Keene's was pure affection.

Always prone to riding hard whatever

hobby he might mount, no sooner did Charles Keene conceive a liking for the bagpipes than he applied himself with zeal to master that instrument; and though he made a dummy chanter, whereon to practise fingering as he walked home after nightfall, his chamber practice was more audible, and "such harmonious madness" from his lips would flow, that at length the listening world besought that he would play beyond earshot of Baker Street. He bravely held his ground awhile, enamoured of his wind-bag as deeply as Titania of her long-eared weaver; but at length, in 1873, he packed his precious pipes—both bagpipes and tobacco pipes—and betook himself to No. 11 in the Queen's Road West, at Chelsea. Here he hired a couple of rooms in a "charming old house," as his biographer describes it, and we learn without much wonder that, like many another such, it since has been demolished, to make room for "street improvements," as the fashion is to call our ugly modern brick-and-mortar works.

Having here a larger stable for its housing, Keene gave a looser rein to his hobby of collecting ancient curiosities. Swords, spurs, old books, old boots, were hung around its walls, or huddled up haphazard among ancient ladies' costumes and modern rustic clothing. Wood-blocks and portfolios of prints lay heaped with printers' proofs and scraps of precious sketches on the few chairs or the floor, and faded silk and satin flounces were degradingly commingled with corduroys and clogs. A rusty bit or two of armour and a pair of iron gauntlets might likewise be discerned, if luckily the day were not too dark for their discovery; while conspicuous at all times was a headless wooden horse, with an old saddle which might serve as the model for a drawing, but which it would hardly have been easy or even safe to mount.

Although in point of curio-hunting they were somewhat multifarious, in the way of food Keene's tastes were always very simple. Perhaps this may account in some slight measure for his not valuing overmuch his weekly privilege of dining with his good friend Mr. Punch. A bit of bacon for his breakfast, dried well-nigh to a cinder, was usually followed by a morsel of fruit pie; and, not finding at Chelsea a good hostelry at hand, he dined mostly at his studio on a mess of Irish stew, kept simmering for hours over a gas jet. In place of pudding he be-

ameared a slice of bread with jam, which, he frequently contended, gave great relish to a pipe. He drank nothing with his dinner, but made himself some coffee afterwards; and then for a while resumed the reading which was usual while he breakfasted or dined. Then he worked till nearly midnight, always trudging home to Hammersmith to sleep, and never taking an umbrella or a hansom when it rained.

Meanwhile his relish for the bagpipes showed no sign of diminution. Ever eager in research of things of ancient date, he amassed so many specimens of this amazing weapon (as its enemies may term it), that his collection was, for art's sake, exhibited at South Kensington in 1874, and has been honoured by a notice in Sir George Grove's comprehensive "Dictionary of Music." Many of Keene's letters written at this period bear witness to the growth of his "new musical vagary," as he called it. In one of them he mentions an enthusiast who was wont to practise piping after nightfall in Hyde Park; and he adds, with a pang of envy, "I wish I had the cheek to do that." Frequently he speaks with pride of the curious old pibrochs he had luckily picked up. Once he tells of "a set with very small drones, so that they sound like a nest of hornets buzzing an accompaniment!" And then he exclaims gaily, "That must be very jolly!" Again he writes, with some contempt, of a friend who had "thrown over strings, and taken violently to the flute—wants to get up a quartette of four of 'em in my rooms! I'm indifferent hardy, but I fancy I should like to have an extra flannel shirt to sit in such a thorough draught!" Yet he seems never fearful of the blasts from his own windbag. Indeed, such was his zealous industry in "skirling," that, had he been a pupil in the old Skye Piper's College, he would probably have learned to finger the "Piobaireachd" in far less than the seven years allowed for that accomplishment, and would have proved to be a prizeman at all collegiate contests.

In the year 1879 Charles Keene removed to his last studio, which likewise was in Chelsea, at No. 239 in the King's Road. "Awful difficult number to remember—no clue," he complains to his friend Crawhall; and, to show his want of memory, he puts the 3 before the 2, so that the answer to his letter goes astray to 329. Here he went on working hard and playing as before, his play being chiefly confined to his dear

pipes. "The love of music (and the pipe) is a part of my life," he declares to his friend Crawhall, while prattling of his flint-lore and fads about old china, at "page fifteen and I've not done yet!" of a long letter begun in May and ended in November, 1876. Sometimes for a change he took up a new instrument, or it would be more true to say another very old one; for new things never suited his fantastic taste. Thus he practised the recorder, which now is well-nigh obsolete, although in Hamlet's time it seemed in favour at the Court. And in the Jubilee Year we find him writing: "I'm very much wrapped up in a book of Irish tunes just now, and mean to go in seriously for the penny whistle—bought a tutor to-day." Strings, too, as well as wind-pipes were included in his playing; for a friend who tells of taking a long country walk with Keene, and then coming home to tea with him at "Tig," describes his sitting "in shirt-sleeves on the sill of the wide-open window, twanging a guitar and looking the picture of perfect happiness."

Nor were his musical proclivities confined to instrumental practice. Being naturally gifted with a good bass voice, he availed himself of any teaching he could get to cultivate the gift. The present writer well remembers singing with him publicly at certain early Handel Festivals, as well as privately at sundry social gatherings of a Glee Club, where the festival, as a rule, was less early than late. Keene, too, was a member of the famous Lealie Choir, and of the scarce less famous and far merrier Moray Minstrels, who, in 1858, first started into favour at a private house in Jermyn Street, and thence had the good fortune to be called the Jermyn Band.

In the spring of 1881 Keene lost the good mother who had sold his first drawings, and thus had given him a start in his artistic life. She died peacefully at Hammersmith at the ripe age of eighty-three; and (the interval excepted when he had lodged in Bloomsbury) Charles, her eldest son, had lived with her throughout his whole life. Affectionate of heart, though not demonstrative in tenderness, he felt the parting bitterly; as may be gathered from a letter which bears date "May 6th," the day she died: "I took my watch this morning as usual from twelve to five a.m., and after getting a little sleep I was called up again. I could not feel her pulse; she drew a few breaths calmly; another—she was gone! I can't

write any more just now, but my heart is lighter now she is released from her pain."

His own good health began to fail him not long after this. In April, 1883, he writes to his friend Crawhall: "Four weeks ago, walking home, I felt what I thought was 'heart-burn,' a pain in my chest that made me roar again. I thought it was indigestion, but I've had it ever since—that is, when I've walked about five hundred yards it begins." And in the following October he complains of being "groggy on my pins—lame as a kitten," as I heard a 'bus-driver express it, though why 'a kitten' I can't guess." Shortly afterwards he finds his usual weekly work for "Punch" is more than he can manage, without hurt to his health. "I'm pegging away," he writes in 1884, "but I find myself a 'barren rascal,' with only one subject a week to do, and wonder how it was that formerly I could accomplish two."

Little as they were, his love for "fairly pipes"* had doubtless greatly damaged his habitual good health. He still went on, however, working at his studio, and walking to and fro some six or eight miles daily, for he still lived at Hammersmith. He was always a good walker; indeed, the love of marching, perhaps, had chiefly moved him, in 1859, to join the Volunteers. His long legs and spare frame were well adapted for such exercise; and even when past sixty he could tramp a score of miles without being overtired. He kept up his dancing, too, another of his delights, until his mother's death. In 1876 he writes to Crawhall: "I'm a useful hack waltzer for my age"; and it is not till 1884 that we find the sad avowal: "I was at a dance the other night for the first time in my life without tripping it"; the writer being then in his sixty-second year.

Although not much of a player, he took greatly to lawn-tennis, rather late in life; and later still to golf, which he likewise failed to master.

But the foul fiend Nicotine put ere very long a sudden end to such delights. Acute dyspepsia set in, with sharp rheumatic seizures, compelling the poor sufferer to give up well-nigh wholly his daily work

* Otherwise called "plague pipes," and believed to have been used for medicinal herb-smoking ere tobacco was discovered. Keene always used these little ancient pipes, and his letters often mention them. "I have found several myself between high and low water at Richmond," he writes to Mr. Crawhall; and to show how fond he was of them he adds: "I very often dream that I'm by a river with sandy banks, and picking up these pipes by hundreds!"

and walks. In July, 1889, he pictures, with grim humour, "My shrunken thighs, hollow and wrinkled with the loss of fat . . . put me in mind of Albert Durer's 'Anatomies';" and in the next month he announces that he has begun to clear the "ket" (Northumbrian for "lumber") he had gathered in his studio; and he adds, with plaintive pathos: "It 'gars me grue' rather. It says FINIS so forcibly."

Strangely enough, as it may seem, a perfect horror of tobacco had attacked him in the spring; and poor Charles Keene without his pipe was about as great a sufferer as an elephant with the earache or a giraffe with a sore throat. "The tobacco taste has not come back yet," he complained in July, and confesses "that's one reason I dread going into the country. What are you to do there if you can't smoke?" In December, likewise, he still laments his pipeless fate: "I have still the distaste for tobacco, and can no longer quote the stanza from my old friend Percival Leigh's 'Ode to Mrs. Grundy' in 'Punch,' years ago:

Grandeur sinking,
Never thinking,
If your censure I provoke,
Oft a cutty
Pipe with smutty
Bowl along the road I smoke!"

On New Year's Day, however, he seems a jot more cheerful: "I'm much better, I hope, as I've enjoyed a longer immunity from pain than hitherto all the year. . . . I take a whiff of tobacco, too, of an evening, which is a good sign." But the 'bacco-phobia came again to haunt him in the spring, when he suddenly was startled to find his feet and ankles swollen. "An ominous and disheartening symptom," he writes sadly, "which promises to confine me more than ever. In short I cannot conceal from myself that I am 'broken down' at present—a stranded wreck."

So until the year's end he mournfully lives on; his last "Punch" cut appearing in August—although drawn a while before—and the last touch of his pencil being given in the autumn to a sketch of his old Dachshund, done to the very life as she lay after death. And on the fourth of January—the first Sunday of the New Year 1891—her gentle master, too, lay dead. Nor was it unlike his tender-hearted nature that one of the last things he said was, on hearing there was deep snow on the ground, "Oh, what will the little birds do?"

On the following Saturday he was buried

at the Hammersmith Cemetery, in presence of many of his relatives and friends, including most of his "Punch" colleagues; and on the second of February his old chums the Moray Minstrels met to sing a solemn requiem in his honour, the company all standing in deep silence till its close.

That Charles Keene was a great artist is now generally acknowledged, and it is not within our province to criticise his work. "Nature made him an artist," says his biographer most truly, "circumstances a humorous one"—though they but shaped the sense of humour which was his natural gift. To compare him with John Leech appears both idle and invidious; for each in his own sphere was admittedly supreme. Keene had not the versatility of Leech, who was as great as a cartoonist as he was in social "cuts," and could draw from memory whatever he had seen. His pictures of the hunting-field were such as he alone could do; and possibly some thought of them may have been in Keene's mind when, in November, 1876, he thus summed up in one sentence all his modest wants and wishes: "If ever I should get months of leisure and liberty, I wonder if I shall have the pluck to set about what I would if I had them now—to draw horses and riders from life, to make bagpipe reeds, and to find a place where I could play the great pipes for six weeks without being heard, and finally conquer them."

Keene, too, had less invention than had Leech, so far at least as finding his "Punch" subjects was concerned. Both of them were most acute observers of Nature, but Keene was the more careful in carrying a sketch-book ready to his hand. "I never could do any work without a foundation from nature," he affirms; although the statement is scarce warranted by his whimsical initial letters, and his charming fancy portraits of his old friend Mr. Punch. He declined to see a difference between figure-scenes and landscapes, as far as regarded any obstacles in treatment. "If a man can draw, he can draw anything," he would say; and certainly the lovely bits of scenery which surround his rustic figures may be cited in support of the axiom he laid down. "Draw a thing as you see it," was another of his maxims; which, indeed, he often personally followed, stopping in the street to make a study of a crossing-sweeper, or to draw from life a sausage manufacturer, or rapidly to sketch some passing incident or oddity that chanced to catch his eye. Ever quick

to seize a likeness, he jotted down, as types, such figures as might strike him; and hence come in no small measure the vigour of his drawings, and the wondrous "go" and movement and aptitude of attitude for which they are so famed.

A hard worker himself, Keene never failed to advocate the need of honest industry to ensure success.

"What do you mean," he asks a friend, "that you have been working, but without success? Do you mean that you cannot get the price you ask? Then sell it for less, till, by practice, you shall improve, and command a better price. Or do you only mean that you are not satisfied with your work? Nobody ever was that I know, except J—— W——. Peg away! While you're at work you must be improving. . . . Do something from Nature indoors when you cannot get out, to keep your hand and eye in practice. Don't get into the way of working too much at your drawings away from Nature."

Where would a beginner look for better counsel? Could Raphael or Titian, could Ruysdael, Claude, or Turner, if advising a young artist, have used wiser words than these?

Lover as he was of Nature, Keene was seldom tempted into caricature. There is no trace in his drawings of the ugliness of Rowlandson, the coarseness of Gillray, or the antics of George Cruickshank. Fond of humour as he was, he never let it tempt him to unnatural extravagance, or to the slightest deviation from purity and truth. Nor was there any trait of jealousy in his artistic temper. Always the first to welcome the good work of another, he was the last to recognise the merits of his own. In the spring of 1878 he writes: "A couple of frames of my 'Punch' sketches have gone to Paris, sent by a friend of mine, and I'll back them to be the cheekiest specimens of art in the whole International. I could not have had the face to send them myself." The drawings were, however, largely praised by Paris artists; and in the following Exhibition, held there in 1889, Charles Keene was one of the few Englishmen to whom the highest honour was awarded for their work. How little he was proud of it, and possibly how much it may have shocked his modesty, may be gathered from a letter in October of that year: "That award from Paris was rather a surprise to me, as I had forgotten I had anything there. I did not send anything myself, but my friend Mr. Edwards

contributed some. It is a queer arrangement. They send you a cast, gilt I believe, and if you wish for the gold medal—proper—you can buy it for a price! I don't think I shall invest!"

But although France was the first country to recognise officially the genius of Charles Keene, England, his own native land, did not long lag behind—only here, it must be owned, the official recognition was deferred until his death. Speaking at the banquet of the Royal Academy in May, '91, the President paid a very just, though a rather tardy, tribute to the memory of "that delightful artist and unsurpassed student of character," who, however, had never been distinguished by the privilege of adding the initials R.A. to his name. "Never," declared Sir Frederick Leighton, speaking in his sweetest and distinctest tones, "never have the humours of the life of certain classes of Englishmen been seized with such unerring grasp as in his works; never have they been arrested with a more masterly artistic skill. Among the documents for the study of future days of middle-class and of humble English life, none will be more weighty than the vivid sketches of this great humorist."

In these days of hurry-scurry scramble, and restlessness, and rush, it is refreshing to be told of a person like Charles Keene, who was placidly content to lead a quiet life. Nor is it less pleasant, in this progressive era of monotonous humanity, to come across an individual who differed from the crowd. Men now mostly are machine-made in their colleges and costumes, their customs and their clubs. Keene was an exception to the rule of the majority. Without the faintest thought or fancy of displeasing other people, he had the sense and strength of mind to live precisely as he liked. His life was a fair protest to the fashionable doctrine, begotten of Mrs. Grundy, that a man who lives in London, if he would be esteemed a gentleman, must wear always a tall hat. This he bravely never did; and although his plain, grey shooting-suit might shock the swell Sartocracy who haunt "the shady side of Pall Mall" and the parks, it rather served to stir the envy of his own less daring friends.

Pure of heart and life; kindly in his nature and simple in his tastes; a loving son and brother, and a true and steadfast friend; untiring in his work, yet heedless of its fame; a most undoubted genius, yet a most contented man—it can hardly be

gainsaid that, uneventful though it was, his life was well worth living, and, indeed, worth writing. And although we may not hope to imitate his talents, yet in his purity, and modesty, and absolute unworldliness, we may truly wish we were more like Charles Keene.

THE LATE MRS. VERNON.

By A. MOBERLY.

Author of "Lady Valeria," etc., etc.

CHAPTER VII.

MURIEL held me close in her arms, and her pretty head dropped on my shoulder. "Did I startle you?" she asked; "I am so sorry, but I couldn't help it. Miles was to have come in first to prepare you, but when I saw you looking so sad and lonely, sitting here by yourself, I couldn't wait another minute. Oh! what a nice place to cuddle!" and she nestled in closer. "Darling, darling," she murmured. How was I to silence her?

Looking up in sore perplexity, I found Colonel Fortescue standing by us, twirling his grey moustache agitatedly. His eyes shone, and he winked very hard once or twice, and then turned sharply away and walked to the window.

"What shall I do?" I cried despairingly. "Oh, Muriel, Muriel, don't call me 'mother.' How you will hate me some day!"

"No, I shan't," said Muriel, with an energetic hug; "that I never shall. I won't call you 'mother' if you don't like it." She went on after a few minutes' consideration, "I'll give in to you there. The fact is, it is too late in life for me to begin as a daughter. I shouldn't know how to behave. What shall we call her, Miles? Léonie? No! you don't like that either, I know. I shall call you 'Madam'—that commits me to nothing. 'Madam' you shall be, when I don't call you 'darling'—I deliver this as my act and deed," and she dropped yet another kiss on my forehead.

I felt myself blush and tremble like a young girl with her lover. It was all so new, so bewilderingly sweet and strange, this pet name—these caresses. When had I ever been anything but "Miss Margison" in my life? Miss Margison! the name seemed charged with suggestions of

slates and sums, grimy tasks of hemming and scanty schoolroom tea. Once, indeed, one of the Tarrant boys home for the holidays had greeted me with "Hallo, Betsy!" and though his father wished to punish him, I readily forgave the indignity. The babies had lain in my arms and put up soft little hands to my wan face, but as they grew up had turned away from me when I had no longer time to pet and play with them.

All this seemed to come into my mind in a flash, while Muriel's pretty head still rested on my shoulder and her slender girlish fingers held mine tight.

"How did you come here?" I faltered.

"Oh, we managed that capitally," she laughed. "Miles—he is a monster of duplicity you know—is always running down to his cottage in Hertfordshire: is it for shooting or fishing?—I declare I don't know. At any rate it is close to our school, and he deludes that poor misguided Lady Principal into such a state of blind confidence that I am allowed to spend every Saturday afternoon with him, or even to come up to town for the day—under charge of a governess, you understand—she looks upon him in fact as a sort of uncle or guardian."

"My dear, I am your father's oldest friend."

"I wouldn't bring that forward as a recommendation," Muriel retorted with a look of bitter contempt that made me start.

"Muriel!" exclaimed Colonel Fortescue sternly, but she only tossed her head and ran on.

"To-day, by good luck, it was Fräulein Schmidt's turn to go on duty, so I at once demanded to be taken to the Doré pictures and the National Gallery. She's as blind as a bat and hates Art, so we connived at her desertion till five o'clock, and she is off for a happy day with some German kindred while Miles brought me here to welcome home my darling!"

I put her clasping hands aside and rose trembling to my feet.

"Have you not had my letter, Colonel Fortescue? I sent it two days ago."

"Did you? I have been down in Hertfordshire since I saw you, except for a few hours in town the day before yesterday. There was much to explain and arrange," with a glance at Muriel, "and I had another reason, which I will tell you presently, for not coming to see you. We

must have a long talk on business before I leave."

"May I take off my hat and jacket?" Muriel demanded, "I feel so untidy."

I was weak enough to let the interruption check the words on my lips, and we left the room together hand in hand. As I closed the door I could not help turning for another look at the tall figure in the window, and caught one in return, so bright, so tender, so well-content, it pierced my heart like a knife-thrust. When we were alone together Muriel flung off her wraps, and seizing my hands gazed once more into my face with a keen, long, searching look, under which my eyes dropped and I trembled.

"You are just the mother I wanted to have," she announced deliberately. "I haven't known whether to be frightened or glad since I heard you were coming. Miles—ain't he a splendid old fellow?—and Fräulein thought me mad this morning, I was laughing or crying all the way up. Oh, if you only knew what it has been like, all these horrid long lonely years; I was worse off than any orphan in the school, though I had a home and two living parents."

"Did you miss your mother so?" I murmured, holding the pretty clinging creature tight in my arms.

"Miss you? Every day of my life. Such a baby I was to be sent from one school to another—I believe now just to prevent your trying to see me. I should have died if it had not been for the pleasure of fighting with Aunt Honor. I hated her, poor thing. I didn't know how much worse I should have been without her—that she stood between me and Mr. Vernon."

"Mr. Vernon?"

"I don't call him 'father'—not likely! I'm under no delusions respecting him you may be sure. He has just begun to act the tender parent, and he does it so badly. I haven't quarrelled with him; where was the use? He had it in his power to make life very hard to me till you came to deliver me. He's a bad man. Even Miles couldn't deny it when I said so, and Miles is one of those who would find a good word to say for the Devil himself if the world was going against him."

"My dear!" I cried, rather scared.

"Oh, I beg your pardon. It was a remark of Bertie's that I quoted unconsciously. It is a relief to put things strongly now and then. Why, Miles him-

self—if you'd heard him swear when I told him about Sir Claude Levison! It did me good! It was just what I wanted to say myself."

"And who is Sir Claude Levison, and the other gentleman—Bertie I think you called him?"

She looked at me with comic dismay. "Hasn't Miles told you? Have we to begin at the very beginning of everything? We shall never get through by luncheon."

She began hastily to try and twist and pull her soft thick coils of hair into place. I pushed her gently into a chair, and took out a dainty lace-trimmed wrapper of her mother's to throw over her shoulders, then shook down her dusky locks and took up the brush. She laughed softly at herself in the glass, and caught my hand to kiss it as it passed. I looked at her too, with a strange, secret, greedy rapture over her grace and sweetness. Why was this not mine by right, this love, these caresses, this clinging bright creature? Why must I put it all away from me and give it up to a dead woman who was past all joy? What could she do for the child? What help could she be?

"Mother, I am like you!" Muriel cried. "I was always an ugly black and white imp, and you were a distinguished beauty—even Aunt Honor admitted that; but we are alike."

I looked at the two faces wistfully. Muriel's was like her mother's, except for the mouth and chin, which were firm and full of character. Mrs. Vernon's had borne traces of past loveliness, and Muriel's was full of the promise of beauty to come, and between theirs and mine was but the superficial resemblance of pale skin, dark hair, and shadowy eyes. I shook my head and went on with my pretty task, blessing the years of apprenticeship that I had served to Mrs. Tarrant.

"How nice you make me look. What will Miles think when he sees me? Isn't he a dear old knight errant? I should have died years ago if it had not been for him. He found me out and cheered me up over and over again; but it was I thought of sending for you, and I stuck to it even when Miles and the lawyer looked at one another and shook their heads, and said: 'The best possible thing if Mrs. Vernon could be induced to come forward, but——' 'She will come forward,' I said, and I wrote to you twice. Did you never get those letters?"

"Never."

"There, I knew they were stopped somehow! I was sure of it! And Miles got so angry, he started off once and followed you to Paris to have it out and set things right, and you wouldn't see him, and left next morning without his knowing. But it's all right now," triumphantly, "and now come and hear about Bertie."

Colonel Fortescue was awaiting our return patiently. He threw down his newspaper, and rose to place me a chair with a perfectly radiant face.

"The child was wisest of us all, you see."

"Bertie and I," amended Muriel.

"I should like to hear about Bertie, if you please."

Colonel Fortescue's eyes twinkled.

"Bertie? Why, he's her latest doll.

A pretty little boy."

"An officer in Her Majesty's service," indignantly from Muriel on the hearth-rug at my feet.

"A dear little midshipmite out on a holiday. They have been playing at sweethearts together."

"You'll find it earnest. He'll get his promotion next June, and then——"

Here the door swung open and the maid announced, "Mr. Bertram Gordon," and I rose to receive a bronzed, curly-haired lad, who stood smiling in the doorway.

"Mrs. Vernon!" he cried, his eyes sparkling, and his strong hand clasping mine warmly. "I hardly expected it. It seemed too good to be true," looking into my face with his bright blue eyes, while he shook my hand again and again. "It's altogether too good to be true," he repeated, with a glance at Muriel that I felt meant a great deal.

"It is true," she answered him. "I couldn't enter into explanations on a post-card, and that was all Miles would allow me to write. Here she is safe, and she is ready to help us all she can, I know. Oh, Bertie, Bertie!"

Mr. Bertram Gordon had given up shaking my hand by this time, and had caught both Muriel's in his, looking ecstatically at her.

"Have you told her?" he asked softly.

"N—not quite. We have been trying. You tell," she whispered.

She was quite another Muriel now; a shyer, more dignified young person, who withdrew one hand with the faintest of blushes, but failed to release the other.

He drew her closer, and spoke out boldly.

"I have asked Muriel to be my wife, Mrs. Vernon, and she says it must depend on your consent and my father's. I dare say you won't think me good enough for her, but I love her with all my heart, and I'll try to deserve her with all my might, and I'll make her happier than any other fellow could do if I die for it. That's all I have to say."

Such a pair of children they looked, despite his brave words and Muriel's quaint, gracious air of approval. Both were silent, looking anxiously to me—to me, Heaven help them!—for sanction or encouragement.

"What can I do? What is to be done? Oh, my poor children, I am of all women most helpless and unfortunate!" I began weakly but Colonel Fortescue laid his hand gently on my arm and spoke for me.

"You must not press for an answer now. Remember all this has come upon her without a word of preparation. We'll tell the whole story presently. Now I shall ring for luncheon."

CHAPTER VIII.

COLONEL FORTESCUE was responsible for that sumptuous little repast of course. I felt strange and awkward in my novel position as hostess, with three such guests round my gay flower-decked table, but my deficiencies passed unnoticed. I was treated as an invalid, petted, waited on, cheered and made much of. The two children jested and laughed and bestowed a hundred small confidences on me. Colonel Fortescue was unusually silent, bent on effacing himself it seemed. I divined that I had to make my own way as best I could with Muriel and her lover, but nevertheless I felt the strength and support of his presence all through. Now and then I caught a confidential glance or smile of satisfaction as he contemplated the two young people opposite. They made a bonnie pair, and their demeanour to one another was perfect, even in my prim old-maidish opinion. I felt myself giving way to the influences of the moment. My confession was made and off my mind. It was safe in Colonel Fortescue's hands, and sooner or later he was bound to know the truth, but this hour was my own.

We drew round the fire afterwards with an air of beginning business in earnest, Muriel settling herself on my footstool with

a plateful of sweets in her lap, which she discussed with frank schoolgirlish enjoyment.

"You had better tell your mother frankly and freely all there is to tell from the very first, Muriel—it's a long story," Colonel Fortescue said, glancing at his watch.

"Go back to the beginning of all things," said Muriel meditatively, picking up a marron glacé. "Let me see. There would never have been a beginning at all if it hadn't been for you, Miles."

"Me! my dear!" with a start of astonishment.

"Certainly. We owe our engagement to Colonel Fortescue, don't we, Bertie?"

"To Colonel Fortescue decidedly—or perhaps to Colonel Fortescue's friends in Malta," responded Bertram promptly, "they may have had something to do with it."

"And possibly the measles," Muriel admitted after reflection.

They told me the story amongst them somehow. It did begin with the measles after all. An epidemic broke out near the school, and Muriel was attacked and moved to the Sanatorium, followed by two little Indian children, and lastly by Mrs. Vipont, the Lady Principal, herself. The rest of the school escaped, and the four invalids went to complete their convalescence at Brighton.

"And we hadn't been there a week before the poor Lady Prince was down with bronchitis," explained Muriel, "and our maid took to going out to the Aquarium every evening with a soldier, leaving me to put the children to bed, and Dottie had an earache every night, and Flossie cried for her ayah, and Mrs. Vipont mustn't be worried and wouldn't let me write for her sister to come, and I really think my mind gave way a little before I sent for Miles. I do not consider myself responsible for any rash action I may have committed at that time."

"You would have been proud of her," Colonel Fortescue declared. "She kept them all alive, nursed the poor lady and mothered those fretful little monkeys, and only wrote to me just as she was breaking down herself. Of course I set off at once."

"Quite forgetting"—Bertram continued the story—"that he had strictly ordered me not to sail without seeing him, and had promised me introductions to his friends at Malta. When I came up to town to dine with him at his club by special appointment, there he was not, and there was nothing

for it but to pursue him to Brighton. Fortunately he had left his address. I got to the hotel and was shown up to his room. It was getting late and the room was in semi-darkness. As I opened the door a female figure sprang forward, I was closely embraced by a pair of young and lovely arms, and kisses were showered upon me mingled with tender reproaches for my long delay. It was gratifying, though meant for another."

Muriel looked up scared, then burst into a laugh. "That spoilt little wretch, Dottie Lyons! Yes, Miles had asked those children to tea in his room to play with his big dog, and I was to go for a drive with him first. Of course they had come half an hour too soon. Don't I remember the orgie we found going on when we returned—cards and empty bottles strewn about!"

"Only lemonade. They were so thirsty, and you had kept us so long waiting for our tea. The four of us—counting the collie, he took a hand—had got through five games of 'Old Maid,' and the doom fell on me each time."

"So there you have it," continued Colonel Fortescue. "I couldn't send the fellow back to town by the next train, nor could I desert Muriel in her distress. I thought three days of him could do no harm—I didn't know the ways of Jack ashore—and that he would be sent off on a reasonable sort of a cruise for a year or two. I never expected to have him back again in six months, following me down to Hertfordshire to see if I could give him any fishing, making excuses for calling on Mrs. Vipont, playing Romeo under the windows—"

"Mother," whispered Muriel very softly, leaning a hot cheek against me, "you don't suppose that I could help it. You don't think that I behaved as nice girls—girls with homes and mothers to consult—might not have done?"

Bertram caught her shamefaced look without hearing what she said, but I loved him for his instant comprehension of her trouble. "Romeo, indeed! More like the young man who died for cruel Barbara Allen," he declared. "That is why I've wanted you to come home and stand my friend, Mrs. Vernon. Not a crumb of encouragement could I get from any one."

"And what do you expect me to do for you?" I asked him rather timidly.

"I hoped you might see my father. He has never refused me anything before in

his life, and I thought if he knew—if the case were put plainly before him——” His fluency seemed to desert him, he glanced at Muriel and grew redder with every word. Then he stopped short and turned to Colonel Fortescue. “I’ve been taken by surprise, you know. I never heard of Mrs. Vernon’s return till I got Muriel’s card this morning, and have not thought out what I want to say to her. Had I not better write? I know I shall blunder into something that ought not to be said if I go on now; or would you explain?”

Colonel Fortescue seemed to understand his difficulty. “We can go into all that presently. Mrs. Vernon is quite clear as to your position I am sure. It is Muriel’s that we have to consider first. She is, as perhaps you know, most unfortunately a great heiress.”

Muriel heaved a pathetic sigh and finished her sweets.

“Her aunt Miss Honor Vernon’s large fortune has come to her, or will come when she is of age. Meanwhile her maintenance and education are handsomely provided for through me and the other trustee. Mr. Vernon is strictly debarred from touching the money under any pretext.”

“Hence all these woes,” interposed Muriel. “If she had but left him a chance of embezzling it comfortably I should be a free and happy pauper in a year or two; whereas now he will have to make away with me as well as my money. I am a valuable article at his disposal, and he will trade me away for what I will fetch—to Sir Claude Levison, unless some one makes a higher bid. Don’t swear, Bertie! That’s no practical assistance. Why are you looking so shocked, Miles? Is there any use in keeping up a pretence of filial piety for mother’s benefit? She knows what Mr. Vernon is better than any one can tell her. She would only despise me if I declared I loved and honoured him.” The girl spoke with the pitiless straightforwardness of her age, and nestled down against me quite composedly when she had said her say.

“Muriel has put the case strongly—I wish I could say unfairly,” Colonel Fortescue said gravely. “Her father made no attempt even to see her while Miss Vernon was alive, but lately he has been going down to the school and insisting on taking her out to drive with him, and Mrs. Vipont has received notice of his

intention to take her from the school at the end of this term.”

“But you won’t let me go!” cried Muriel, looking up with a frightened face. “You mustn’t let me go to him!”

“Never!” shouted Bertie. “My father must and shall give his consent to our marriage, or we’ll do without it. I am ready to throw up my profession to-morrow and carry her away to the ends of the earth rather than that blackguard shall lay a finger on her.”

“Gently, gently, my dear boy. Don’t speak that way of her father, leave him to me. I can make Tom Vernon hear reason, and as for that scoundrel Levison, I would kill him with my own hands before I would let him—bah! what nonsense we are talking!”

He stopped, and Muriel’s clear girlish laugh broke the pause like a saucy bird’s chirrup in a thunderstorm.

“What queer things men are! Marriage for me or murder for poor Sir Claude. Are those your best plans? Why, I made up a dozen better in the train while we were coming up to town. Here’s one. Can’t I go mad?”

“We have no time for joking, Muriel,” Colonel Fortescue said sternly.

“Mad,” repeated she undaunted. “You get two doctors to examine me, you know, and you’ll see what they say. I’ll be dangerous and violent if you like—anything to get them to lock me up in some nice asylum out of harm’s way. They will keep me there till I’m one-and-twenty. Bertie will be an Admiral or First Lieutenant or something by that time, and you can get me out again.”

“Four years of an asylum! You would probably be a lunatic in earnest by that time. I would rather consider one of your other eleven expedients first.”

“Well, then, who’s the other trustee?”

“Mr. Alexander Brownlow, of Great St. Helen’s.”

“Can’t we get at him and persuade him to turn fraudulent? I’ll make it all good to him somehow. Can’t he invest this wretched money in some swindling company, or gamble it away on the Stock Exchange? Mother and I could have a dear little cottage together, and Miles would come and see us.”

“I am afraid Mr. Brownlow is incorruptible. What of the other ten suggestions?”

“We must drive a bargain with Sir Claude himself.” She was speaking in

earnest now. "We must buy them off—it can be done. See him. Ask his price, I'll pay it gladly; and make him promise to deal with Mr. Vernon—he can manage him if he chooses. Promise them all the plunder if nothing else will serve. Don't trouble about me, I can work. I'll make bonnets—I should like that; or I'll go as house-parlourmaid. I'm tall, I wear no fringe, I don't want followers. Go and arrange it, Miles. I'll sign a bond, or back a bill, or circumvent the lawyers in any way he pleases. Tell him he'd be better off with the money and without me. I won't marry him without raising such a scandal as never has been heard of." Muriel's voice was quiet, but her face was very white and her eyes looked wicked. "He must marry me by force," she repeated slowly, "and then I shall kill myself and most likely kill him first. Oh, Bertie!" with an instantaneous change of look and tone, "don't look so horrified! You know it is only when I think of you that I grow desperate." She sprung to her feet, dismayed by the storm of wrath and passion in his fair boyish face, and slid her hand in his arm, leaning her cheek against his shoulder; but he drew away from her and walked to the window, where he rested his arm against the frame and his forehead on his arm, engaged in a silent struggle for self-control, poor boy. "Help us, Miles! What are we to do?" she asked in a choked voice.

"Nothing heroic. My suggestion is a very commonplace one after all. We must make you a ward in Chancery. I haven't a notion how to set about it, but the lawyers can tell us. I don't even know whether I could have moved in the matter,

but there can be no question of your mother's right to interfere. That will be another advantage to us of her presence here, but we must lose no time. Shall you feel equal to an interview with Mr. Fairbrother, my man of business, on Monday?" he asked, turning to me. "I wish I need not hurry you so, but every hour is of moment. It is a great point that your husband never suspects that you are in England—or I think not. Your name was only mentioned once in the newspaper accounts of that accident, and Tom never reads anything but the sporting intelligence. But we must be careful—very careful."

I was busy watching the pair in the window, and he stopped to look too. Muriel had laid her cheek against Bertram's sleeve, and was murmuring some soft half-jesting little nonsense, lifting her witching eyes now and then to his. His face was still set and wrathful, but he seemed to yield like a child who is half ashamed of being coaxed out of a fit of naughtiness. We saw her open the window and slip out, and I jumped up in a small maternal flutter of anxiety, thinking of the chill evening air, and hurried to fetch her hat and coat. She laughed at me, and protested and kissed me, regardless of public observation. There was no one to see us except a single sauntering figure in the distance, whom as he drew near I recognised, with a start and a thought of Kitty, as "the man in the fur coat." Before I could even make sure of him he had hailed a passing hansom and was gone, and the lovers had the street to themselves.

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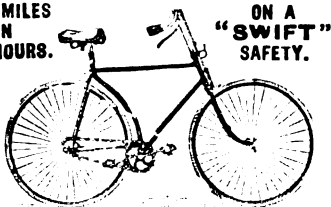
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MISS LATIMER OF BRYANS.

By ELEANOR C. PRICE.

Author of "Alexia," "Red Towers," "The Little One," etc.

CHAPTER XIV. THE OLD FARM.

THE scattered parish of Bryans took its name from some Norman hero and conqueror, whose descendants possessed it till the time of the Wars of the Roses. Then a certain Falk Fitz-Bryan dying childless, and repenting of his sins and oppressions, left the estate to an Oxford monastery which sheltered him in his last illness. The monks did not possess it long. On their dispersion in Henry the Eighth's time, this fine piece of plunder came into the hands of Hugo Latimer, who was not, however, a relation of the Bishop's; so that the present owner did not inherit from her family any leanings she might feel towards martyrdom.

The Latimers of Bryans had no Puritan inclinations. They were staunch for Church and King. In Charles the Second's time they became courtiers, and thereby lost so much money that they were obliged to sell their best farm and most of the land in that part of the parish to a sturdy man of yeoman descent, Geoffrey Thorne by name, who had made his money as a London trader, and wished to settle down as a country gentleman. His descendants, however, were not so ambitious as himself. They had neither his talent nor his wish to rise; they were content to be what their ancestors had been, yeomen of the old English type. Thus they lived on at Sutton Bryans, which had come down from father to son since those days, independent of the Squire yet touching their hats to him, as Miss Fanny Latimer

explained to Otto Nugent. Meanwhile, the Latimers ceased to concern themselves with courts or with public life, and lived, too, from father to son, a line of honest, loyal, plainspoken country gentlemen, great at sport and prominent in the county, but not remarkable for brilliancy of any kind, and strangely free, as a family, from any of those vices which might have made the Bryans estate shrink into smaller limits still. Now the long line of Latimers had ended in a girl; Porphyria, empress in her own right, as Mr. Cantillon used to say. It seemed a pity; but this is a century when many old things are ending.

It was not till the next afternoon that the Rector walked over with his news to Sutton Bryans. He knew, of course, that it would have got there before him; but after leaving Mrs. Arch he had felt too tired, too excited, to make what was always, in spite of its picturesqueness, a rather weary pilgrimage. And he longed irresistibly for his own study, his own garden, where he might think over the coming changes quietly and at rest.

Besides, though Fanny had asked him to tell the Thornes, it was not really necessary. Young Thorne would carry the news to his people. So that even the next day the Rector might have absolved himself. But he did not wish to do so, for all the evening and great part of the night his mind was troubled and haunted by that young fellow's face. He was not likely, it was true, to do any good, to be of any use to him. It was not a matter that a parishioner, however unhappy, was likely to confide to his clergyman. Still the Rector felt, "I must go and see. It won't hurt him to make a new friend, and I know we shall like each other."

Early in the afternoon, therefore, he walked down his garden, resisting the reproachful looks of the flowers that asked him to linger among them, crossed the field and the bridge to the upper road, from which a path through the churchyard brought him to a green bridle-road under a long line of beeches, oaks, and hollies, skirting the wide and sunny slope of a lately cleared harvest-field. This was followed by grass fields, large, green, like sweeping downs, where flocks of sheep were feeding. Sometimes the path led right across these fields, sometimes along the hedge on their upper western side. Here and there the ground was bright with poppies, large daisies, blue corn-flowers lingering. Now came a stile into a plantation all carpeted with last year's brown leaves which filled a little hollow between these large fields; then again the path came out into the sunshine on the broad side of the downs. All the horizon was bordered with woods, just beginning to show something of autumn's bronze and gold; here and there a break in their line showed long folds of blue, soft, misty distance. All was lonely and still; hardly a trail of blue smoke to suggest a human dwelling anywhere.

At last, climbing a steep slope, the path reached a tall clump of fir-trees with grey and yellow stones about their feet, standing like a beacon to the country round; and from this hill, which sheltered it from some of the sweeping winds that howl across that country in winter, one looked almost straight down on the buildings of the old farm at Sutton Bryans. Beyond, in the hollow, a cluster of thatched roofs, dark with age and yellow with lichen, showed where the small hamlet itself lay. The farmhouse, with all its fine barns and outhouses, built of the stone of the country, had splendid new roofs of red tiles, which the weather was only now beginning to tone down into beauty. These were owing to Geoffrey the artist, who, on his last visit, had found his father just about to roof all his possessions with slate.

Mr. Cantillon went carefully down the winding footpath, which was steep, and a little dangerous here and there from roots of trees which crossed it. The low wall of an orchard bounded it, but it continued inside this, under the low boughs of old apple-trees, till it reached the garden gate, and passed on between borders of old-fashioned flowers, as gorgeous, though not so carefully tended, as the Rector's own.

Then it became a pavement which led round the house, screened from the windows by a yew hedge. From this a door opened straight into a large and beautiful kitchen or living-room, the flagged floor of which, worn with age and washings, and heavy, dark oak beams, had probably been part of the old homestead bought from the Latimers by Geoffrey Thorne of London, in King James the Second's time.

Lucy Thorne, the present Geoffrey's sister, met the Rector at the door. She was a short, sturdy, dark-complexioned woman of six or seven-and-thirty, with a firmly set mouth, a good square brow, and eyes that had a look of Geoffrey, but without his imagination or his gentleness. She was dressed in an ulster and billy-cock hat, and carried a dog-whip in her hand, which she shook at two collies, her companions in the room. They thought it necessary to spring up barking and growling from their places on the hearthrug when Mr. Cantillon appeared at the door.

It was not Lucy Thorne's way to look pleasant, though she was a clever woman in her way, and could talk agreeably if she chose. To-day she looked rather more forbidding than usual. She pointed to a chair near the great fireplace, which was picturesquely filled with green boughs.

"You like this room better than the parlour, don't you?" she said, and sat down herself, flicking with her whip at the end of the nearest collie's tail.

Mr. Cantillon made a remark on the weather. In the presence of Miss Thorne he always felt as if his senses deserted him, and he was therefore sorry to find her at home alone.

"Is Mr. Thorne at home?" he asked; "and your brother?"

"No; my father and Frank are gone to Oxford."

Mr. Cantillon murmured that he was sorry not to see them.

"What does your father think of this news, Miss Thorne? It must be of great interest to us all—all the parish. Miss Latimer particularly asked me to convey it to you; but I fancy I'm late in the field. Your youngest brother brought it home yesterday, no doubt. I saw him at Mr. Farrant's when I went there to tell them."

It was a moment or two before Lucy Thorne answered him.

"I suppose you mean Miss Latimer's engagement. Yes; we heard the news last night. Somebody brought it from

the village. It's true, then? I thought perhaps it was only gossip. Well, she wasn't likely to be unmarried long, was she? People were sure to look after an heiress."

"Your brother did not mention it, then?"

Mr. Cantillon could not help saying this, though he knew that it might sound like very strange and unauthorised curiosity in Miss Thorne's ears. She did not look at him, and again paused before she made any answer, leaning forward in her chair and trying hard with her whip to reach the farthest collie's ear. Mr. Cantillon, watching her, grew more nervous every moment, with a strong feeling of anxiety.

At last she sat up, twirled back her whip, and gave him an odd, furtive glance.

"Well," she said, "I suppose you have some reason for saying that. I don't know that it matters much what Geoffrey told us or what he didn't, and it isn't my way to talk about family affairs. You know that well enough by this time. Still I don't deny that I should be glad to know what you mean."

In ordinary circumstances, Mr. Cantillon would have been terribly confused by this speech. To-day, though nervous enough, he was only conscious of a deepening interest.

"You must forgive me," he said very gently. "Possibly I ought not to have said it. I am naturally surprised, perhaps, especially as he had met them in Switzerland so lately."

He stopped; but she said nothing, keeping her eyes fixed on the floor. It was easy to see that she was worried. He knew that she was by nature a fussy woman; but also that her fussiness generally found vent in a torrent of words and a general scolding of everybody.

"Is your brother Geoffrey at home?" he asked, after a minute.

"No. Do you want to see him?"

"Not for any particular reason. We never met, you know, till yesterday. But I have seldom seen a young man who took my fancy more."

"Geoffrey is thirty. That's not so very young."

"Is he really?" said the Rector.

"Old enough to have more sense, I think," she said gruffly. "Well, as far as I can make out, you won't see him again at present. He's gone off abroad."

"Gone off abroad! To-day! Last night! When?"

The Rector absolutely shook with excitement. He started from his chair and came to stand near her on the hearthrug. The two dogs both sat up and began to lick his hands in a friendly fashion.

"Lie down, I say," cried their mistress, with a sudden crack of her whip.

"Do you seriously mean it, Miss Thorne?" the Rector was asking. "What object can he— Now don't treat this as ordinary curiosity. It is not that at all."

"Well, Mr. Cantillon," she said, without lifting her eyes, "nobody who knew you would take it for that. Yes, Geoffrey's gone, without a word to anybody, except this scrap of a note." She pulled a piece of paper out of her pocket and gave it to the Rector. "As I tell you, my father and Frank went off early to Oxford. I was out all the morning seeing after things. When I came in, not much before one o'clock, the servants told me that Geoffrey had left the house soon after eleven, with a bag in his hand. Of course, I went straight to his room, and there I found that attempt at a letter. He didn't think us worth more, I suppose. Read it aloud, will you?"

"Dear Lucy," Mr. Cantillon read, holding up the paper, for he had left his most useful eyeglasses at home, "I must go back to Switzerland. My return is uncertain. You will hear soon. Ever yours, G. T."

"Considerate!" sneered Lucy Thorne; and for a moment or two the Rector said nothing at all. At last he spoke very gravely, and with a new kind of authority as well as friendliness in his manner.

"I must know a little more, please. When he came in yesterday afternoon, did you notice that anything was the matter?"

"He did not come in yesterday afternoon. He never turned up till after nine o'clock at night, and then he just looked in and said he had an awful headache and was going to bed. My father called out to him, chaffing him, and asking if that was the effect of taking Maggie Farrant's likeness. He didn't answer, and went upstairs. I went and knocked at his door and asked if he didn't want any supper, but he said no, and told me to go away. I called out, 'Have you heard the news about Miss Latimer?' He didn't answer for a minute, and then he said, 'I wish you'd let me go to sleep in peace.' Then I said, 'You're ill, and if you're no better to-morrow morning I shall send for Dr. Crutch.' He mumbled something I couldn't hear, so I tried the door, but it was locked.

So I left him to himself and went downstairs."

"What was he like this morning?"

"He came down very late, after the others had started. He looked awfully pale and ill, and wouldn't eat any breakfast. I dare say it wasn't very nice, for the things were cold; we don't expect people to come down towards nine o'clock, you know. I wasn't cross to him, though. I made him some hot tea, but he hardly drank it. I said, 'Come now, Geoff, we know what all this is about. Don't be a bigger fool than you can help.' He said nothing, but called the dogs and went into the garden. I went about my business, and that was the last I saw of him."

"You knew, then—you had reason to think——"

"Well, Mr. Cantillon, if you saw at a glance, we are not likely to have been blind all our lives. When Geoff was a boy, the way he worshipped that girl was a joke amongst us. But I did think he had grown out of such nonsense till he came home the other day, just fresh from meeting her again at that Swiss place. Since he came home he has done nothing from morning till night but talk about her. All to poor me, of course; the others wouldn't have stood it. I had to let him loaf about and hinder me all day long. I was often cross enough, and yet I hadn't the heart to snub him or chaff him too much. He was always my boy, you know, from a little fellow, and though I've heard and seen little enough of him, goodness knows, for years past, what with his going abroad, and his painting, and all that, still when he came back I couldn't help feeling the same. I never wanted him to live at home, you know. We didn't suit him. He's too much of a gentleman for us, with all his artistic ways. He was born so, I suppose. It was nobody's fault. But I've often told him he'd better have fallen in love with the dairymaid; and now, if you ask me what's going to become of him, with his one idea killed on the spot, as you may say, I don't know how to answer you."

The Rector stood with his head bent, his eyes fixed on Geoffrey's poor little letter. They were a little dim, and the words swam before them, but that did not matter. One of the colliers crept up and rubbed against him, and licked his unused hand again. The Rector gently and absently stroked the soft head, and this time Miss Thorne took no notice of her dog's demon-

strations. When the Rector spoke it was with a little effort.

"My dear Miss Thorne, I feel with you, but I don't altogether agree with you. One is always sorry, of course, for these hopeless fancies, and yet, do you know, a young man like your brother could have met with no more refining, ennobling influence. You cannot tell from what this admiration may have preserved him. No, no, don't say that he had better have fallen in love with the dairymaid. If that had been possible he would not have been the fine fellow he is. I am glad you have been a comfort to him. And this one idea—its sudden death seems to you terrible—but I suspect it has only died in the form of a hope—in which really, you know, after all, it can hardly have existed—and if I judge your brother rightly, he will conquer this trial and be more of a man than ever."

Lucy Thorne looked up with a curious smile, and shook her head.

"You're very clever, but you don't know Geoffrey, and I do. He's more of a donkey than you think. He had hope, lots of hope. I won't say she gave him any—not intentionally, I'm sure—but somehow he managed to misunderstand her a bit. I think she had better not have set him things to do for her, such as painting that girl's portrait, making her more conceited than she was already; but that's neither here nor there. Ah, you needn't explain, Mr. Cantillon. I know what great ladies are, and how they think of men like Geoffrey. I know better than he does. That's to be got out of books as well as out of life."

"Miss Latimer is incapable—it would be impossible," began the Rector hurriedly.

"Oh, I know all about it. She would never understand that he could misunderstand her. She's come down straight from all her ancestors. Unfortunately, Geoffrey has sprung out a bit from his; so he doesn't know his place quite so well as Frank, for instance."

She paused. The Rector, amid his distress, thought that she was a more clever and interesting woman than he could have believed possible, after their acquaintance of five years.

"You think I am worrying myself too much about Geoffrey," she said; "about his going off again like this?"

"No, no; I think it is a very great pity. I trust he has no idea of—of——"

"Of flinging a despairing idiot at Miss

Latimer's feet?" she said with a short laugh. "Oh, I don't know. I'll answer for nothing. I tell you, he is rather desperate. I knew he was pretty bad when he wouldn't even pour it out to me. But all this time I haven't told you what alarms me most. It does frighten me; only he's a good boy, and I won't let myself think about it."

"What do you mean?"

"He has taken a revolver. He had none of his own. It was one of Frank's, which happened to be in his room. I missed it directly."

The Rector frowned and turned pale. Lucy planted her elbows on her knees and hid her face in her hands with an impatient sigh.

"What you have told me," said Mr. Cantillon in a cold, quiet voice, "is very much more serious than anything that has gone before. A revolver! What does he want with a revolver? He must be mad."

"Not mad, but miserable. If he shoots anybody it will be himself," murmured Lucy Thorne.

The Rector looked at his watch, and glanced from it to the tall clock in the corner.

"We are wasting time," he said, "in the most unpardonable way. What time did you say he left the house? Soon after eleven? Then he walked to the station and caught the 12.20 train. He will spend the afternoon in London, and go on by the night boat. Eight o'clock from Charing Cross, isn't it? Is that the way he generally goes?"

"Yes."

Lucy lifted her head, and stared in astonishment at the Rector.

"We must overtake him in London and bring him back. In any case, whatever his state of mind is, he had much better not go."

"They will not be home in time."

"I was not thinking of them. This is my affair. The only question is, can I get to the station by 4.15? You are more than three miles from the station, and it is twenty minutes to four now."

"The cob will do it easily," said Lucy Thorne. She was standing up now, erect and stern, all her business-like qualities rampant. "Shall I go with you? If so, I'll take a boy to bring him back."

"No; let me go alone," said Mr. Cantillon.

Ten minutes had not passed before Lucy, the best whip in the county, was

driving the Rector in a high dog-cart at a swinging pace up and down long hills with broad green margins. She had thought, though he had not, that he would not be able to get back that night, at least not further than Oxford. Insisting that there was plenty of time, that she could go twice as fast if she chose, she turned up to his house in the further road at Bryans, and gave him five minutes to put together a few things for the night. Then they started off again, stared at by many slow and wondering eyes as they flashed down the village street, and went at a steady trot up and down more hills, and past fantastic groups of beeches on mossy banks by the road, and through a shadow of woods, and over a bridge, once more crossing the quiet, willow-shaded river, then, with a final spurt, swinging along the level towards the station, and arriving there two minutes before the train was due.

Mr. Cantillon got down, and held out his hand to Lucy with his sweetest smile. They had talked very little during the drive. He looked pale, and his eyes were bright.

"I don't believe I ought to let you go," she said, leaning down to him.

"Trust me as I trust your Geoffrey, and all will be right," he answered.

"I don't mean that. Of course I trust you. But you look so tired. Do get something to eat at Oxford. Promise me."

"I shall have plenty of time to dine comfortably in London." He lifted his hat and turned into the station.

"How queer it is," thought Lucy Thorne as she drove away, "that you may know people for five years without knowing them one bit!"

Something of the same sort crossed Mr. Cantillon's mind as he stepped into his train.

MARRIAGE.

THERE have been few more unsatisfactory discussions than that as to whether marriage is a failure. The answer is so obvious. It is a failure when it is a failure. It is not a failure when it is not a failure. If you fill all the volumes in the British Museum you will get no further. If two people do not agree, they do not agree. Practically, as regards agreement, it makes no difference whether they are married or single.

People seem surprised that so many marriages should turn out failures. I do not know why they should be. How many friendships are enduring? Not a large percentage. Why? Because the qualities which go to make a good friend are rare. You find him out or he finds you out. And so husbands and wives find each other out. And small wonder. Everybody wants to marry; certainly the large majority want to marry. I change "everybody" to the "large majority," because, no doubt, as you will perceive when you reflect, there are people who do not want to marry. And I believe, moreover, that, not seldom, these are the very people who marry first.

Probably, if it were possible to publish an accurate statistical account of how every marriage came about which has taken place in England within the last five-and-twenty years, the world would be amazed. It is my own persuasion that scarcely any person can give a logical reason why he or she was married. Possibly, Mr. Sharp will be able to tell you that he married Miss Green because she had fifty thousand pounds. But, Miss Green will not be able to tell you why she married Mr. Sharp. Circulate a census paper among the married folks of England asking why they married each other; at least ninety per cent. will reply that they have not the faintest notion. It is no answer for Mrs. Plumper to say that she married Mr. Plumper because she liked him. "Good gracious, Mrs. Plumper, what made you like a man like Plumper?" "Well—I don't know—I suppose because he liked me." "Plumper, what made you like Mrs. Plumper?" "My dear fellow, I've asked myself the question a hundred times, I've not the ghost of an idea." If we could put all married people through some such catechism as that, their replies would be found sufficiently amazing. There must be multitudes of people who, when they ask of their own hearts why they married, find themselves unable to supply themselves with an adequate response. And it is quite likely that some of those very persons have made the happiest marriages. There is the mystery.

A man has sat by a woman's side in an omnibus, spoken to her for the first time in his life in handing her fare to the conductor, married her within the week, and lived happily with her ever afterwards. There is a story told of a man who went to a big tradesman. "You supply your

customers with everything; do you supply them with wives?" The tradesman thought that he might be able to supply a fair class of goods even in that line. He introduced a young lady who was serving behind the counter. The customer started off then and there to procure a special license, married the girl in the morning, and never regretted it to the day he died. There is no *prima facie* reason why such a story should be false. You know that Mrs. Griffin has known Griffin all her life; she has never lost sight of him from childhood's hour; as children they were playmates. They were engaged three years; the most careful settlements were made on either side; and now is there a house in England which is large enough to hold them both? You say that it is a mistake for a man to have known his wife too long before he married her? My dear sir, I know a case of two cousins who were born in the same house, within a few weeks of each other, who have lived together in the same house ever since, and who have been married now more than twelve years, and a happier marriage never was. The thing is a mystery.

Some tell you that happiness in marriage is an affair of physical constitution, of like mating like. This is by no means certain. I am acquainted with a somewhat notorious case of a woman, who, as a girl, was very pretty, and who is still very far from ugly. She married a man who was one of a family of paralytics—to the ordinary beholder a dreadful family. He was partially paralysed at the time she married him—married him, it may easily be credited, against the wishes of all her relatives and friends. He has done nothing for himself, unassisted, from that hour to this. For some time he has lost the entire use of all his limbs. Yet she continues to worship him with what, to onlookers, is a wholly incomprehensible devotion. Until recently I used to see her every day. She looked the picture of happiness, of perfect content with the good the gods have given her. I know another case of a man who has wheeled his wife in front of him for, I understand, over two-and-twenty years. She is afflicted with some terrible disease. He is now an officer on half-pay—he has only his half-pay to live upon—and to see how he watches the very shadows as they chase each other across his wife's face is enough to bring the tears into your eyes. No, happiness in marriage is not necessarily an affair of physical constitution.

Others tell you that children bring

married happiness. Always? Can the ladies and gentlemen who figure in the Divorce Court never show any fruit of their unions? You must have a limited acquaintance if you do not know a Darby and Joan who never had a baby of their own. But, you say, there are more happy marriages with children than without. Possibly. Because, in the very large majority of cases, marriage and children go together. If you mean relatively more, I doubt it. I doubt if children have much to do with it either one way or the other. It is absurd to say that happiness in marriage depends on similarity or dissimilarity of mental temperament. Wise men marry fools and never regret it; and wise men marry fools and never cease regretting it. We are constantly being told, by a certain class of people and in a certain class of literature, that happiness in marriage depends upon moral qualities, that a good woman should marry a good man, that that is the secret. This may be beautiful in theory, and one may feel that one would like to believe it; but, unfortunately, it is contrary to the teachings of experience.

These beautiful theories of the theorists! These tarradiddles which are instilled into our minds when we are young! After one has attained to man's estate life is one long process of waking from illusions. As I grow older I become more and more persuaded that happiness in marriage has nothing at all to do with moral qualities. It ought to have, perhaps, but it hasn't. To suppose that a wife is happy with her husband merely because he is good, or that a husband is happy with his wife merely because she is good, or that each is happy with the other merely because they both are good, is the purest nonsense. Love, we are informed, makes the perfect marriage. "Ah!" exclaims the sentimentalist, "when love steals in at the door discord flies. Where love is there is heaven below." Particularly do you read this kind of thing in the love-tales. "As Reginald folded Angelina in his arms perfect bliss was theirs." Does this mean anything, or is it merely rhapsody? If it does mean anything, what does it mean?

Most people who speak glibly of love speak of it without having a rudimentary notion of what love is. It is to them an unknown quantity. Very much an unknown quantity if they would only, just once in a way, pause to think of it. The feeling generally spoken of as love is,

in a hundred and one cases out of every hundred, like one's appetite, evanescent. The kind of love, especially, which is frequently raved of by the poets, is not only, of its very nature, evanescent, but, like the trail of the serpent, it leaves the very worst effects behind. Some of these gentlemen might as reasonably urge their admirers to make the one end and aim of their being a desire to "quaff" a hogshead of neat brandy at a sitting. Their raptures suggest one form of delirium tremens; the hogshead of brandy would merely suggest another form. Those who begin with an ecstasy of passion, in one sense, will inevitably end with an ecstasy of passion in another sense. At the best the result will be a polite equivalent of black eyes. Men and women are unable, by reason of their constitution, to keep up an unnatural tension in any one direction for any length of time. The tension is apt to become equally unnatural in a diametrically opposite direction. The pendulum swings. Tom loves Jane madly when he marries her; six months afterwards he enjoys as little of her society as he conveniently can. Madness has its contrasting phases.

Love, in any decent sense, requires self-sacrifice. How many persons are there capable of genuine self-sacrifice — of even momentary self-sacrifice? Of the self-sacrifice which, un murmuring, endures to the grave—how many persons have you met capable of that? And though Tom may be capable of self-sacrifice for Jane, it by no means therefore follows that Jane is capable of self-sacrifice for Tom. How many a Jane is there who is sacrificing her all for Tom, while Tom, at the best, merely approves her sacrifice. Many a woman has married a man really loving him, she has sacrificed all that she could for him, she has devoted her life to making his life happy. Gradually it dawns upon her that, from the first, he has really only been permitting this, that all the time his heart has been with other gods. Then it is that the trouble begins. Love is a two-edged weapon; cynics have found this out a long, long time. When you find that you have given your love for nothing, your own love will turn on you and cut you to the heart—not impossibly your own love will destroy your lifelong happiness; it has destroyed the happiness which gave it birth many a time.

We may remark to the sentimentalists who inform us that it is love which seasons marriage, that the number of happy mar-

riages into which love has never entered for a moment, from first to last, are as the sands of the sea for multitude. There is happiness and happiness. There is the happiness of the man who asks nothing better than to have a pair of slippers on his feet, a pipe in his mouth, and a paper in his hand; and there is the happiness of the man whose vision soars to heights empyrean. There is the man who, so long as he can live a humdrum kind of existence, unaffected by any violent earthquake shocks from without, is as happy as the day is long. If a man of this kind marries a woman of his own kind, his cup of happiness is full, and, one may add, so is hers. People of this sort abound; they form the bulk of the English middle classes; they are the backbone of the country—typical English folk. Talk to them of love! Stuff and nonsense! They never indulged in such folly. "Did we, Mary?" "No, John, that we never did." They read the reports of the breach of promise cases with contemptuous amazement. They never wrote each other "spooney" letters; they never exchanged "spooney" words; thank goodness, no. Five minutes after marriage, and fifty years after marriage, they address each other with exactly the same common-sense stolidity. They are attached to their house, they are attached to their furniture—especially are they attached to their easy-chairs—and they are attached to each other. Indeed, they almost regard each other as easy-chairs. Each is a necessary adjunct to each other's comfort; if John dies, it is quite possible that Mary will marry again—the chair, having worn out, needs replacing. If Mary dies it is equally possible that John will marry two other wives in quick succession, and he will be happy with all three of them alike. The sentimentalists who maintain that no marriage can be happy where no love is must either have a limited acquaintance of their fellows, or they must have wilfully closed their eyes to the things which they have seen.

How great is the multitude of counsellors! What a number of people there are who are fond of laying down the law! Almost every one has a recipe which, if followed out, will ensure happiness in marriage, just as almost every one has a recipe for the curing of a cold. Did you ever read Mark Twain's "Curing a Cold"? You will find it instructive. Acting on his friends' prescriptions almost brought him to the grave. The one sort of recipe is just as valuable, and as valueless,

as the other. There is no such thing as a recipe, the following of which will ensure happiness in marriage. If you have the faintest glimmerings of logical perception you will perceive that this must be so, when you consider that no two persons in the world are exactly alike, and that what exactly suits one person exactly suits no other person. Marriage is not only a lottery—it is a lottery with which the doctrine of chances has no concern.

A very frequently quoted advice to those about to marry was, "Don't!" I have no advice to offer. I am one combination of constituent parts, you are another; I cannot read the secrets of your heart, you cannot read the secrets of mine. My opinion may be of value to myself; to follow it might be positively mischievous for you. Asking you to bear this in mind, I say that if I were beginning the world again I would marry, in spite of all the prophets of evil that ever prophesied, and of all the leading cases on the other side that were ever yet recorded; and for this reason—that marriage offers some of the greatest and grandest prizes this world has in its power to bestow. I doubt if they are not the best of all the prizes; I believe they are. If you were to tell a young lawyer that his chances of obtaining the Lord Chancellorship were, to say the least of it, remote, if he had the making of a man in him, and knew himself, he would not cease to be a lawyer on that account. Things worth the having are not to be had merely for the asking; the apples which fall to the ground are not the best on the tree. What is worth the having is worth the striving for; you may not get them though you strive, and strive with might and main; that, in spite of all the assertions of the preachers of the dogma of the infallibility of "Self-help," most certainly is true. But you are surely less likely to get them if you do not strive at all. There is nothing in this world better worth the having than the good things which are to be had in marriage.

Consider what some of these things are to the workers; to the men who have some aim in life other than the enjoyment of the hour, or the living through of the passing day; to those who aim their arrows high. To me this matter is so sacred that my pen hesitates, for I have vainly searched for fitting words with which to put the plain truth of the matter on to paper.

There is no solace, in this the hour of

his bitterness, which can be compared to the solace which is to be had from a woman; not from any woman, but from the woman—his wife. It is not a necessity that she should be wise, nor is it necessary that she should be a fool; it is certainly not necessary that she should be morally perfect. You may not be morally perfect yourself. The men who, being sinners, are ready to cast stones at all women who are not saints—let them stand in the very presence of Him who showed mercy to the Magdalene. Do not suppose that it is necessary that she should be a sinner; as a matter of fact, morally, the average woman is infinitely above the average man. In this to which I am alluding the question of morals does not enter at all; all that is necessary is that she should be a creature of flesh and blood, and that she should make your sorrows hers, knowing that, with herself, you will take her griefs into the comforting shelter of your arms. There is no solace which can be compared to the solace which is to be had from such a wife as that; the sort of solace which she gives, although she may not know it, nor you, gives you strength with which to shoot another arrow, greater accuracy of aim, and that sort of pleasant courage which not seldom wings an arrow straight unto the mark.

I should not wait to marry until I had achieved success. I do not say this to you—you wait; political economists advise you so to do. I say it of myself, and for these reasons. First, because the woman who would not, unhesitatingly, go with me through the thorniest places is the sort of woman I should not care to marry; and, second, because those who have been together, side by side and hand in hand, through the Valley of the Shadow are those who, in all the world, are nearest to each other, and, because nearest, dearest. They have then, and only then, become what I understand as flesh of one flesh and bone of one bone. But with the kind of woman whom I have in my mind's eye—and she is to be had: given the man, he will find the woman—even the passage through the Valley of the Shadow shall not be all bitterness. Unshed tears may be in the eyes both of him and her, but there shall be something in their hearts which shall be stronger than the tears.

Love in a cottage is theory. Love in adversity is, now and then, a fact. The reason why love flies out of the window when poverty stands at the door, is because

there are so many fools in the world. I am no admirer of poverty. Not I! Strive against it; keep it from you as you would the plague. But though you may strive against it with might and main, poverty, refusing to be repulsed, may still continue to sit at your side. It is the way of the world. Rich men may say that it is not so. Poor men know that it is. But though the rent be overdue, and the butcher refuses to send the joint, and success still shuns you in spite of all your wooing, it is not very ill with you if a woman shall steal into the room, and shall put her arms about your neck, and shall whisper, "Yet all shall be well!" The words may be unspoken. There is a manner of utterance which is more eloquent than speech. And with the woman whom I seem to see it was born, with her, into the world. May you be man enough to prize the pressure of her arms.

The woman who is ready to share your sorrows will be equally ready to share your joys. She will welcome them with outstretched hands. It is very possible that, in the hour of your triumph, she will be a very child. In that hour may you, also, still be a child. Note this. The man who triumphs should be, to the world, as though he did not triumph. It is not only the better policy, but, to my mind, such a bearing is more becoming to a man. In the face of all men, do not triumph in your triumph. But there is one who will triumph in your triumph; and, with her, it is meet that you should triumph—with the woman who has passed with you through the Valley of the Shadow. In the hour of victory may you be man enough to sing your song of victory alone with her.

It is a singular trait of a certain sort of human nature, that the man who is willing to share with a wife his sorrows is unwilling to share with her his joys. There are teachers who tell us that a clever and an ambitious man should not take unto himself a wife, lest she should hamper him, not only in the days of his struggle, but also in the days of his achievement. It takes all sorts of men to make a world. To me such teaching is most amazing. By all means let each man ask himself what is his aim in life. If he himself is, to himself, the beginning, and the middle, and the end, by all means let him set up his god and worship it. If he is cool, and hard, and calculating, it does

not by any means follow that he is, in any sense, a worse man than either you or I; and, probably, to him marriage is but an incident. There is nothing to be said against that. Each man is entitled to his own point of view. If we could only see it! We see it swiftly of ourselves, but slowly enough of others. To numbers of men marriage is but an incident. That is their point of view, and one which, so far as I can see, they are quite entitled to hold.

But this I do affirm: the man who, when he was nothing and nobody, married a woman who brought him nothing but her love, who shares with her his struggles, and who, when the day of his triumph comes, drops her, just as though it were a matter of course, to all intents and purposes out of his existence—I do affirm that such a man is a cur. Such curs are to be found in what, in the world's reckoning, are the very highest places. There is the great actor, Mr. Stacit. You meet him everywhere; in princes' houses. Did you ever see Mrs. Stacit? No. Yet there is a Mrs. Stacit.

"Dear Mr. Stacit! Such a dreadful story! So sad for him! You know, when he was a young man, and his genius was still unrecognised, I have heard that he married quite a common person—a mere ballet girl, I believe. Altogether impossible that she should be received in society."

That is the sort of thing you hear—and from women. Altogether impossible to receive her in society! A much more impossible person is received—Mr. Stacit. The man, despite his outward fantastic trappings, is really but a dirty blot upon the fair scutcheon of our common manhood. What is meant is this: Mr. Stacit, when he was a beggar, took unto himself another beggar, in the shape of a woman, accepted all that she had to give him, fed her with the bread of bitterness, and when, after years of struggle, triumph came at last, he denied her what she had earned more righteously than he had done—the rest which cometh after labour, the joy which follows pain. There is the popular artist, Dauber. You meet him everywhere. Did you ever meet Mrs. Dauber? You hear her spoken of, in a whisper, at the club. "I rather fancy that Dauber married his model. Couldn't afford to pay her fees, so he married her instead." He couldn't afford to give her money for her services, so what has he given her

instead? What has he given her? The privilege of being his wife? And what a privilege it seems to be! It appears that she was only to regard herself as his equal—his wife—up to a certain point in his career; and then—what was she to regard herself as then?

Gentlemen of Stacit's kidney and of Dauber's kidney abound. They are quite common among the ranks of what are called successful men. They are statesmen, lawyers, authors, financiers, divines. A woman who is married to a certain type of man must look forward with positive terror to the days when he shall achieve success. She knows that his triumph will mean her fall. When I read that oftentold story of the woman—which, mark you, is always told against the woman—who destroyed her husband's masterpiece before it was given to the world, I wonder if that woman did not know her husband through and through; if she was not too well aware that he was quite prepared to sacrifice her on the altar of his own self-seeking. And I ask myself if she was not almost justified in the thing she did. I do not know what is sometimes meant by the "rights of women"; but I do know this—that it is the right of every woman to share, to the last fragment, the triumphs of the man who, voluntarily, of his own free will, has merged her life with his.

It is as well that men, before they take unto themselves wives, should consider. Let there be no false pretence about the matter. False pretence, you know, is, perhaps, in some degree unmanly. If the partnership is to be limited, let the limit be clearly understood. If you, being little Smith, intend, when you become the great Smith, to leave Mrs. Smith alone, after many days, to eat out her heart in the cold and the darkness, while you are away, basking in the light and the sunshine, it would perhaps be well that you should make that quite clear to plain, and possibly poor, Miss Brown—be she model or ballet girl—before you do her the honour of making her Mrs. Smith. If, when the great days come, you mean to be ashamed of her, better let her know now how nice your feelings are upon some subjects. It will, at any rate, be honest; and, also, it will prepare her mind; she will know the kind of man you are—now, when it is not too late; instead of then, when, having for your sake fought a good fight, and the silver trumpets of the heralds proclaim the

victor, she looks into your eyes with gladness, and you thrust her, worn, torn, and bleeding, without the lists. She will be disappointed when, falling back, she is trodden under foot by the shouting crowd. You see, what she did was done for you.

THE LAND OF TURTLE.

UNTIL the recent little harmless "blow" in the French Chamber of Deputies, how many people had ever heard of the Island of Aldabra, much less of its occupation by British troops? Very few, either in France or England, so much so that the question of ownership could not be determined by officials right off. The exhibition of French emotion, however, led to an investigation which revealed that Aldabra had never been either occupied or claimed by France in times past; had, in fact, always been included in the list of British possessions, and had been for long the subject of a fishing lease, granted and signed by the British Governor of the Seychelles Islands. By "always" should be understood since the repartition of territory which took place with the Treaty of Paris of 1814, when was ceded to Great Britain "the Island of Mauritius and its dependencies."

So much then for ownership, but as to occupation, that is a mere figure of speech. For troops to land there might not be impossible, but would be ridiculous. There is nobody to attack or protect—nothing to seize or to guard—not a "native" to conciliate or terrorize. The only inhabitants of Aldabra are too slow-moving to be affected by the prevailing "Race for Africa" or anywhere else, and too pachydermatous to feel the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune, or of pugnacious foreigners. In point of fact the Island of Aldabra is the idyllic land of a London Alderman's gastronomic vision. It is the Land of Turtle.

The only inhabitants belong to the cold-blooded race of chelonia, and among two great families of that race—the Testudinidæ, or Land Tortoises, and the Chelonidæ, or Marine Turtles—the land is divided. The most valuable member of the family of chelone is the Green Turtle—the joy of the epicure and the founder of the Aldermanic banquet. Of this precious creature Aldabra is able to contribute some twelve thousand specimens per annum to the cuisine of the world.

The island, as we have said, is the

subject of a lease granted by the British Governor, or Administrator, of the Seychelles Islands. The lessee is a Mr. Thomas J. Spura, a naturalist as well as a turtle-fisher, who has recently, at the request of the Government, made a special report with regard to the physical aspects and resources of Aldabra. As this is the only published description of a place of much interest, we shall extract the substance of the official document.

Aldabra is the name usually applied collectively to a group of four islands lying between 9° 24' south latitude and 46° 22' west longitude. These four islands are Aldabra, Astone, Cosmoledo, and Assumption. Of these Aldabra is the most westerly, the most interesting, and apparently the most valuable, and to it we will confine our attention.

It is an island some twenty miles at its greatest length, bending crescent-wise to the east, and forming a basin in the interior closed in to the east by three small islets. The channels between these islets are four, but only one admits of access to the enclosed lagoon at low water, and this is so narrow that it is swept by such swift currents as to render the passage almost impracticable except for steamers. The island itself is flat, of agreeable aspect, remarkably verdant, and covered with trees and low shrubs. Into the thick interior bush, however, no one seems to care to penetrate, for there the mosquito reigns supreme.

The islands are of coral formation, raised by volcanic force, and it is remarkable that, unlike other coral islands, Aldabra has no sandy beaches or sandy plains. It is one solid mass of coral, of an extraordinary strength of growth. The solid mass attains its greatest height—one thousand nine hundred and twenty-five feet above the sea—at an elevated promontory on the western side, distinctively called Picard Island, where, in the course of ages, the decomposing coral has formed a wonderfully fertile mould; only there is too little of it for profitable use. The west of Aldabra is protected by a reef of from one hundred to two hundred yards wide, of the type familiar in coral lands, but on the east side the sea beats against the cliffs.

Two agents of destruction have left marks of recent activity. The number of overturned trees bear witness to the violence of the hurricanes which occasionally tear over these lonely islands;

and the occurrence of standing forests, silent and dead, is proof of some fatal mephitic exhalations from the volcanic soil. When, years ago, Commander Needham, R.N., visited Aldabra in the "Reindeer," he saw several times large jets of vapour shot up, indicating that volcanic action was still going on then.

The flora of Aldabra is very rich in comparison with most coral islands, and includes some thirty species and varieties of trees and shrubs, but it is with the fauna we have at present to do.

Among these the tortoises are very numerous and very big, notwithstanding the savage attacks and wanton destruction of the Arab harpooners on Picard Island. In fact that portion of Aldabra had been completely denuded of tortoises when Mr. Spurs took the lease, and one of his first proceedings was to take a number of large specimens from the main part of the island and place them on Picard, where also strong measures had to be taken for the destruction of the rats, which are the natural enemies of young tortoises. Now the chelonians are increasing and multiplying again on Picard at a great rate.

Heavy and clumsy as is the land tortoise, it can move about with almost incredible swiftness and skill. Mr. Spurs gives a remarkable instance of their powers in this respect. He had been in the habit of collecting them in ditches for the purpose of redistribution, and one day when at work in this way he saw a tortoise run away across the plain just about a minute after he had placed it at the bottom of a ditch. It had actually climbed up the almost perpendicular side with the help of its nails.

The tortoise, of course, is valuable as a provider of the tortoise-shell of commerce, and the Hawk's-bill variety furnishes the best shell. Between May and September the tortoises hide themselves in the woods, or in the most secluded places they can find, and do not show themselves at all. Then with the first rains of October they begin to come out again, and to make preparations for their pairing arrangements. The breeding season is from November to February, and the females will lay from six to eight eggs at a time.

The sea-turtle abounds in the whole Aldabra group, but especially on the shores of Aldabra Island, but it is the males alone who are in evidence in the bays and on the promontories. The female turtles disappear as soon as ever they reach the

reproductive age—which is supposed to be not sooner than their twentieth year—and where they go to no man has been able to discover. After a time they return to the shores covered with barnacles, as if they had been making a long sea voyage, and proceed to lay their eggs. This they do three times in each season, and each laying produces one hundred and twenty-five eggs.

It is thought that the over preponderance of males accounts for the disappearance of the females from the coast. The proportion of males to females at maturity is estimated at ten to one, but the proportion "hatched" is the reverse, namely, ten females to one male. As the females are more valuable and more easily caught than the males, they are quickly reduced to a minority, and therefore when the breeding season comes on there are terrific combats among the males—combats from which the sharks and the dog-fish largely benefit, for the mortality is large. Mr. Spurs says that he once caught a dog-fish ten feet long, which had in its stomach the heads of three turtles, several fins of large turtles, and an entire young turtle weighing thirty pounds—a most capacious maw.

The chelonians have other enemies. As soon as the young are hatched, and before they are strong enough to reach the water, they are attacked and devoured by the land-crabs—of which Mr. Knight has told such ghastly things in his story of Trinidad Island—by the grallies or waders, and by the man-of-war bird. Until they are mature enough to reach the water they are never safe from these enemies, and once in the water they find a new set of foes in several turtle-loving fish. In search of security they allow the currents to carry them far out to sea, where they find comparative peace for a time in the deep water.

The Hawk's-bill turtle, which yields the best tortoise-shell, was once the chief attraction of Aldabra, for the species found there was exceptionally large and fine. But the supply has been greatly reduced by the Arabs, who come over in dhows to harpoon them. At low water the turtle are to be found feeding near the rocks at the depth of a few feet, and then is the opportunity of the harpooner, who spears all and sundry, large and small. The destruction is fearful, for the instrument used is a sort of spring knife, which opens when it enters the animal, and to extract which invariably entails death.

The Administrator of Seychelles, Mr. T. Risly Griffith, does not take so gloomy a view of the effects of depredations of the Arabs as does Mr. Spurs. He says that the fears which were entertained at one time that the land tortoises would become extinct in consequence of the excessive hunting, have not been realised, and that the difficulties of the hunt and the seclusive nature of the animals themselves are powerful safeguards. At the same time there seems little doubt that if legislative enactments could be carried out in this distant and solitary place, a great deal could be done, not merely to conserve the species both of land tortoises and turtles, but greatly to encourage and increase the growth.

Of the Green or edible turtle, the lessee expects to take upwards of twelve thousand annually without diminishing his resources. The meat is dried on the island for shipment, and twelve thousand turtle annually means an amount of Aldermanic bliss which we are unable to express in terms of pints or pounds sterling.

Besides the turtle, the shores of Aldabra abound in that peculiar sea-slug called *bêche-de-mer*, of which the Chinese are so fond, and which forms so important an article of commerce in the South Sea Islands. Some Chinese were last year sent from the Seychelles to Aldabra for the purpose of gathering and preparing *bêche-de-mer* for shipment to China, where there is always a large and ready sale for this curious edible, with its mythical virtues. *Orchilla* weed also abounds on the island, but the resources otherwise seem limited.

In fact Aldabra does not appear very attractive as a place of residence, but it is certainly interesting as the favoured home of the turtle.

OVER THE RANGE.

A WESTERN SKETCH.

WE had just finished breakfast one Saturday when a boy from a neighbouring ranch, about fourteen miles off, came riding up hastily. His appearance did not surprise us very much as we thought he brought an invitation to spend the next day with our friends, and go to church with them; that particular Sunday being the day on which old Father Byrne, the American Episcopalian minister, held service in the wonderful wooden building,

in which on Sundays all sorts and conditions of ministers did duty turn by turn. When our turn came we all usually, at least those from a distance, made a day of it, took the waggon and team, attended the two services, and had supper with the Sanborns before coming home.

But Gila's errand was a very different one. His father, who had been ailing for some time, had died in the night; would I come "right along and help the folk at home, and bring any black clothes I had with me, as the funeral was to be to-morrow?"

There was only one answer to be made to this, of course. I hurried in and got together what I wanted, and made what few preparations I could for leaving the boys to themselves for two or three days.

Luckily I had done most of my Sunday cooking before breakfast, baked and made a couple of cakes, so with plenty of milk and butter they would do well enough till I returned; so I put all the black things I could find into gunny sacks and was soon ready to start with Gila, with whom the boys were smoking a sympathetic pipe.

We unhitched the buggy from the fence, put my "grip-sack" in the back of the trap, and started, one of the boys coming to see us safely over the Santa Fé track, which ran round a curve just in front of our gate. The road we had to travel was a fearful one, up hill and down dale, over "wash-outs" and bluffs, right across the prairie to the "Divide," on the other side of which East Cherry Creek, on which the Sanborns' ranch was situated, lay.

It was in late spring, and the prairie was covered with flowers. Anemones, or as they are called out West, crocus; violets, the wood violet of England without any scent; larkspur, Indian lilies, and the tall soapweed, were blossoming in profusion all round us, whilst the crimson and orange cactus made great splashes of vivid colouring at intervals. All the Western flora is, however, perfectly scentless; the daisies grow in clusters like a cowslip, the pansy has violet leaves and vice versa. Being still early in the year, the prairie had a green tint over it, caused by the gramma grass, which was just coming up. A week later and the whole country would be the colour of dried hay, except on the sides of the creek or wherever there was irrigation, or scrub oak or poison ivy covered the ground.

"When did your father die, Gila?" I asked at last of my silent companion, a

little old man of fourteen, who would have been a merry schoolboy at home.

But there are no children on the Western ranches; there is no time for play, and very little for lessons, except in winter. You see little girls of seven and eight standing on stools at the wash-tubs, and small boys who can walk under a cow very often milk the animal also.

So little Gila Sanborn was as sedate as if he were a middle-aged citizen, and answered me equally quietly.

"He was taken bad last night, was popper. I'll allow he had a real hard time of it, for it was sun up before he went 'over the Range.' And mamma she took on dreadful; our Ella concluded I'd best hitch up and come right along for you to help."

"Quite right," I answered, holding on tightly to the side of the buggy, for we were rushing wildly down one of the bluffs to gain sufficient impetus to send us up the hill before us, the prairie being like Atlantic rollers. And then as we began our upward ascent I asked Gila what he meant by saying his father had gone "over the Range." I gathered from his reply that it was one of the Western phrases for death, and as I looked ahead, for we were now beginning our weary climb up the Divide, I saw beyond the foot-hills, and towering far above them the great peaks of the snowy range of the Rocky Mountains standing out white and calm against the deep blue sky. There they had stood for ages, when the country beyond them was an undiscovered bourne, unknown and undreamt of. What wonder the early settlers of the West gave the name of "over the Range" to that other bourne from which no traveller returns?

We were now passing up a deep "wash-out," and had to proceed with caution, but on either side of us the road, or rather the deep sides of the gulch, were covered with the lovely pale blue and white Alpine columbine, which had the most enormous blossoms I had ever seen; so I picked several armfuls and stored them in the buggy under the seat, to avoid their being wilted by the sun, which by this time was high up and very powerful.

"What do you mean to do with those?" asked Gila, after watching me in silence for some moments.

"I am getting them for a wreath," I answered. "Don't you have flowers at funerals out here?"

He shook his head as if he did not quite

understand me. "We have spiced beef and juniper ham, to say nothing of chicken and pumpkin pie. But if you like the flowers, and your people have them to home, bring them right along," he added politely. "Popper was always sot on English customs."

So I brought them "right along," and as we were now on the top of the Divide got in again.

Between us and the foot-hills, which, owing to the rarity of the air, only looked about two miles off, when in reality they were over ten; down on the other side of the ridge we were on, lay a long green stretch of country watered by two creeks, their course easily to be traced by the fringe of cotton-woods and willows on either side of them, and the verdancy of the alfalfa fields they irrigated.

On East Cherry Creek stood the Sanborns' ranch, a comfortable-looking log-house enough, with great corrals in front of it, and the feed corral, even after a severe winter, full of stacks; indeed, the sunflower stack was untouched, a sure sign that times went well with its owner. Another sure index of prosperity lay in the fact that the Sanborns could spare a few hours for the graces as well as the necessities of life, for the front of the land near the house was enclosed in a neat fence, and laid out as a tiny flower garden, whilst "morning glories," the large white English convolvulus, climbed over the fence and all up the wooden verandah which ran the whole length of the house, which had no blinds down, and all the windows flung wide open. Poor Mr. Sanborn had only died Saturday morning, and was to be buried the next day. Such haste seemed almost repugnant to one's feelings, but was a necessity, owing to the altitude at which we were living.

Then we went into the house, where the poor girls and their mother were sitting stitching, and I was greeted with effusion and bidden to "lay off my hat and come right in."

It is always well to comply with the first injunction, as Western people consider it a breach of etiquette for a woman to sit down in their house with her hat on, and I once unknowingly gave great offence by having lunch with some neighbours without removing it!

Ella, the eldest girl, had chosen to take a great fancy to me, and had proposed my being sent for, and she now insisted on getting some lunch, in spite of all her

trouble and my protestations to the contrary. However, as it turned out, the tea was a good thought, for neither poor Mrs. Sanborn nor the girls had had any regular breakfast, and had been up for three nights. The poor woman herself was fearfully calm—too much so, I thought—and evidently keeping up for the girls' sake, for except for her weary face and a black dress with a crape bow she had raked up from somewhere, she might have been arranging details for the usual Sunday's picnic, instead of for the sad ceremony which must take place on the morrow.

Their great difficulty was, at so short a notice, to find sufficient clothes for them all to have a decent suit of black. Luckily I had two black frocks, besides a black calico akirt and a jersey, some gloves and vells, and Gila had brought some hats from the dry goods store in the little city, where he had had to call on his way to fetch me. He had also brought a roll of black ribbon, and as we were all quick with our fingers, the end of the day found the women folk with a suit of black each, which looked well enough on, whatever it was composed of, and was, moreover, a great comfort to the poor things.

And Ella and I went to the door for a breath of air after all our sewing. We stood there silently for some moments, and then she said :

"Will you come upstairs and see popper?" without the hushed tone in which I was accustomed to hear the dead spoken of. "They have put him in his casket now, and mamma is there sitting by him."

I hesitated for a moment, for I felt it might be thought an intrusion, but she put her arm in mine.

"Come right along," she said. "Popper liked you, and mamma will like you to see him."

So we went into the room together, and Mrs. Sanborn looked up at us with the ghost of a smile on her patient, weather-beaten face as we came up to the bed.

"Seems kind of resting in his Sunday clothes, don't he?" she said, and stroked the lank dark hair.

It was a shock at the moment to my ideas, for instead of being in his shroud the dead man was completely dressed in his Sunday suit of broadcloth, even to a white collar and black ribbon tie.

The two windows of the room were wide open, the blinds were up, and the sun-

beams dancing in and flickering over the bed, and on to the still white face with eyes shut for its last sleep.

Outside the sights and sounds of everyday life were going on as usual. Close to the window Maisie, the second girl, was drawing water from the well; we could hear the splash of it as she unhooked the bucket and carried it into the house. In the corral the cattle were being driven in for milking by Gila, with the house-dog barking at his heels; all was life and bustle. And inside lay the quiet figure with folded hands, who had done his last day's work and started on the long journey over the Range.

There was far too much to be done, however, to indulge in sentiment, and we wanted to leave Mrs. Sanborn all the time we could alone with her husband, whilst we made the preparations that were needed for the morrow's journey.

All the ranchmen and "boys" of the neighbourhood would, we knew, come round to go with the family as a mark of respect, and that meant that food must be prepared and taken with us to eat between the services, as having such distances to go the midday meal was always eaten in the little churchyard.

So we baked and roasted and made pies far into the night, for although we knew the neighbours would all bring something, yet the poor girls and their mother seemed to take a sort of sad pride in having things, as the latter said, "Jes' so." Perhaps, after all, their feeling was quite as acute as if they had sat with hands folded in their laps, deluged with tears. They felt it was the last thing they could do for the one who was gone, and they wanted to take all the trouble they could about it.

So hard did they work that when the girls laid down for a few hours, declaring that they could not close their eyes, they slept the sleep of utter exhaustion, and as Mrs. Sanborn declined my offer of sitting up with her, I am ashamed to say I did the same, although I fully intended to keep awake all night.

I awoke with a start and a feeling that something was going to happen, though I hardly realised for a moment where I was. It was broad daylight, and somewhere downstairs a clock was striking four. The three girls were still sleeping heavily—poor things, they had much before them—so I stole softly away, lit the kitchen fire, and soon had a kettle boiling for tea.

Just then Gila came in, hitching his pony to the fence softly.

"Where are you going?" I asked unthinkingly, for the boy's stoical little face quivered as he answered:

"Three of the boys are going with me to the cemetery to—to dig."

I was sorry I had asked, but, anyway, being up, I flew round and got them some breakfast. They had come overnight and slept at the ranch, their intention being to steal off quietly in the morning with Gila, taking what food they could get. We were all like mice over the meal, so glad that the poor mother and her girls were still sleeping, and as I went out into the cool morning air to see the boys off, Gila said:

"The chores are all done and I've set the milk, let mother get all the sleep she can," and they rode off silently.

But as I turned to go into the house again, Mrs. Sanborn was standing at her window looking out with a far-off look upon her face. I don't think she saw any of us, so I hurried in, got some fresh tea, and coaxed her down to have it. No one can tell what will break up people's calmness in times of sorrow. With this poor woman it was the dog Bruce, who had always been trained to fetch his master's slippers, and now did so, putting them by his empty chair.

That made her cry bitterly, and I could think of nothing to say to comfort her—could only be foolish and cry too. But she was evidently a woman accustomed to place a strong restraint upon herself and think of others first, and she soon recovered herself and began talking of the arrangements of the day. She settled it all then—the order in which we were to drive to church—the girls in the double buggy, and Gila would drive her and "him" alone in the waggon. I wanted her to have one of the girls with her; but no.

"When we first came here," she said, dry-eyed enough now, "he drove me across the Divide in the waggon; jest him and me, and all our sticks of things behind us. This wasn't the good house you see now, only two log rooms then, and we were beginning life together. Now I guess we'll have our last ride, but we'll have it together, him and me, in the old waggon."

So it was settled; and by the time the girls had had their breakfast and we were all dressed, Gila had returned and it was time to set out. Many waggons and buggies were now at the gate filled with

neighbours who were going to "follow"—a strange multitude of conveyances, from the primitive buck-board to the more pretentious double-hooded buggy, all their occupants wearing some symbol of mourning, although the mixture was very odd occasionally, as in the case of a black crape rosette pinned in front of a pink sun-bonnet. But if the outward signs were a little incongruous sometimes, there could be no doubt as to the kindly feeling which had prompted it; and after all, there is that about death which invests its meanest surroundings with a strange dignity. We were soon moving on our way, preceded by the Sanborns' waggon, and the end of the procession formed by the riders, their long-tailed horses being reined up and walking slowly till the ranch was passed and the open country began, when the pace mended not a little. For on the prairie every one either walks or lopes, the fast trotters being mostly kept for city uses, and the long tails are cultivated as a protection against the flies, the summer pest of the state.

We reached the church in due time. It was a barn-like building, made of wood and roofed with shingles, with "This is the Lord's doing and is marvellous in our eyes," painted over the door. Here we all went in, and the coffin was put in front of the altar, which was an extension-table railed off. The seats were planks laid upon dry goods boxes, and unless you sat down carefully upon them they were apt to tip up and upset you. But the days of this edifice were already numbered, and there was to be a neat wooden church erected and properly seated, which was finished long before I left the state. Then, however, it was a wretched concern, hardly water-tight, though it had plenty of windows through which you could see the mountains towering up into the sky.

When the church was full, old Father Byrne began the service; but I could not take my eyes off the coffin, which had a large pane of glass let into the lid, through which you could see the face of the dead. The service was all said inside the building, and Father Byrne gave a discourse, chiefly a eulogy of the deceased and an exhortation to follow in his footsteps. We none of us, I think, heard much of it. It seemed unneeded in sight of that grey, shrunken face beneath the coffin-lid, turned towards the Snowy Range—an unspoken sermon in itself. A hymn was next sung, "Rock of Ages," to the tune we all know so well;

and then the service concluded with the Hebrew form of benediction: "The Lord bless thee and keep thee; the Lord make His face to shine upon thee and give thee peace now and for evermore."

And as the last "Amen" was said, the bearers lifted up the body and carried it out of the church. Only the men folk followed and the chief mourners; there was a long pause, during which you could hear, through the open door, the spadefuls of earth falling on the coffin. When no more was to be heard we all went out; the grave was filled and earthed up, being laced over with barbed wire to keep the prairie wolves away, and on the top were the columbine wreaths. Many comments were passed upon these, one being that it "looked kind of less lonesome, and was a pretty fashion," and another being given by Judge Craig that they "wor pretty enough for an English churchyard maybe; but," he concluded, "they coyotes would soon destroy them."

Next came lunch, which to-day every one took on the other side of the church to which the newly made grave was; and if poor Mrs. Sanborn and her girls could have eaten ten chicken pies apiece they might have had them. Every one had brought some little delicacy to tempt them to eat, one friend having—Heaven only knows at what care and trouble—procured some mutton—a meat we hardly ever saw from year's end to year's end. For ours was a cattle country, and if any one at that time ventured to introduce sheep into it, why, it was so much the worse for him and his flocks. They were driven away for miles, or poisoned, and the owners stood in danger of their lives.

We had another service after dinner; for as the Episcopalian Church had only the use of the building whenever there were five Sundays in a month, Father Byrne naturally liked to put in all the services he could, and the dear old man usually gave us the full dose of sermons, to say nothing of collections, as these last augmented his stipend, which was a very meagre one, considering that he served four churches.

Indeed, on one occasion he plaintively remarked at the end of the day that the total of the collections would only just pay his fare on the cars; and certainly, although there were other coins in the plate, the one most frequently represented was the ever useful ten-cent bit—the dime.

Afternoon service being over, the majority of the congregation, who had long distances to go—ourselves amongst the number—unhitched the horses and started home.

Poor Mrs. Sanborn! it was a wrench to her to tear herself away from her husband's grave; but when she had at last turned her back upon the little churchyard, she said, as she climbed into the buggy, in which Gila was to drive her home:

"I du like the flowers. It seems to me less unkind like to leave him alone there with them."

The girls and I drove back in the waggon, silent for the most part. It was a calm, lovely evening; the sun was well in the west; soon he would be behind the Rockies, and leave us in the darkness, for we were so close to the mountains that we had half an hour's less light than the ranches lower down on the plains.

But if only one could see beyond the great peaks standing out sharp and clear against the evening sky, there would be light, and warmth, and light; for the sun, like the friend we had laid out of our sight that day, had only gone over the Range for a time.

SOME ENGLISH OPERATIC CELEBRITIES.

THE first professional singer I remember hearing in London, some sixty-four years ago, was Sinclair, who had established himself as a popular favourite by his exquisite rendering of "Pray, Goody, please to moderate," in "Midas." This, however, was before my time; my only recollection of him being as the chief male interpreter of an indifferent opera called "Native Land," in which the charming Maria Tree figured most attractively as Cælio. "Sinclair," says Macready in his "Reminiscences," "was rather a rough Scotchman, and it is related of him that when John Kemble recommended him to place himself under D'Egville, to acquire more ease and grace in his action and deportment, he replied, in his strong north-country accent, 'I thank ye, sir, I'se vera well where I be.'" He died in 1857.

I have a far more vivid recollection of his great contemporary, Braham, who preserved his vocal powers longer than any singer on record, not having altogether retired from the exercise of his profession at the advanced age of eighty-two. He

was pronounced by Charles Dibdin to be the finest singer he had ever heard, and this opinion was certainly endorsed by the public, for a more popular favourite from the commencement to the close of his career, it would be difficult to name. Naturally gifted with a full, clear, and resonant voice, he was also a thorough musician and a clever, if not very original, composer. His chief defects were a tendency to overload his singing with floriture of questionable taste, and an evident desire to court the noisy applause of the many rather than the more intelligent approval of the few. As an actor, he was on a par with Rubini, in other words, "a stick"; but in such characters as Tom Tug, in the "Waterman," where he had plenty to sing and little else to do, he was unsurpassable.

Braham sank a large amount of money in building the St. James's Theatre, and never recouped himself during the management of it, his "paying" successes having been few and far between. He seems, however, to have resembled the heroine of the French song, "*Jenny l'Ouvrière*," "*qui se contentait de peu*," for I have read somewhere that he remarked to the dramatist Kenney, on one particular night, that he was proud of his pit. "Upon which," says the author of "*Love, Law, and Physic*," "I went round to the front and counted exactly fourteen persons in it."

I can just remember "Kitty" Stephens warbling, "Bid me discourse," with that enchanting sweetness which delighted alike old and young, and my memory recalls to me a pleasing, but by no means beautiful face and a somewhat ungraceful figure. According to contemporary statements, it was in the simple ballad that she particularly excelled; bravura music neither suiting her appearance nor her style of acting. As Polly in the "*Beggar's Opera*" and Rosetta in "*Love in a Village*," she is said to have far surpassed any singer of her time. She was past forty when she became Lady Essex, and survived her husband many years, respected and esteemed by all who knew her. In 1836—if I recollect rightly—two of her nieces, the Misses Smith, appeared at the St. James's Theatre and sang "I know a bank" very charmingly.

It rarely happens that vocal and dramatic excellence of a high order are found united in the same individual; one of the few possessors of these twofold requisites that I can call to mind being Maria Tree.

A pupil of Bishop and Tom Cooke, she first appeared at Covent Garden, in 1818, as Rosina in the "*Barber of Seville*," with unqualified success, and subsequently reaped fresh laurels by her exquisite performance of Susannah, in the "*Marriage of Figaro*." On the revival of Shakespeare's plays with music, she personated successively Viola, Ophelia, Imogen, and Rosalind, and in each character displayed a grace and refinement peculiarly her own. Of her original "creations" the two most noteworthy were unquestionably Mary Copp in "*Charles the Second*," and Clari in the opera of that name. Her delicious warbling of "*Home, sweet Home*," in the latter piece, suggested to Luttrell the following pretty couplet:

On this Tree, when a nightingale settles and sings,
The Tree will return her as good as she brings.

Maria had less pretension to beauty than her sisters, Mrs. Quin (the Drury Lane dancer), and Ellen (Mrs. Charles Kean); but her features, although irregular, were singularly pleasing; her figure was admirably proportioned, and her voice one of the sweetest and richest in tone I ever remember hearing. In 1825 she married Mr. James Bradshaw, some years M.P. for Canterbury, and made her last appearance at Covent Garden in her favourite parts of Clari and Mary Copp. She died February the seventeenth, 1862.

There are certain songs which old players like myself are apt to associate with particular singers, without admitting the possibility of their being equally well sung by any one else. "*Cherry Ripe*," for instance, is inseparably connected in our memories with Madame Vestris; "*Kate Kearney*," with Mrs. Waylett; "*Rise, gentle Moon*," with Miss Love; and "*My beautiful Rhine*," with Mrs. Honey. Similarly, that very tiresome bravura, "*The Soldier tired*," in "*Artaxerxes*," exclusively recalls to me Miss Paton, as Mandane, a part exactly suited to her flexible and sonorous voice, which she managed with consummate skill. I remember her as Lady William Lennox, strikingly handsome, and in the full possession of her splendid powers, and subsequently as the wife of the tenor, Joseph Wood. She had then entirely lost her looks, and her once rich and melodious tones had become disagreeably harsh and unsympathetic. In the winter of 1841 I heard her and her husband for the last time at the Dublin Theatre, in the "*Sonnambula*." They

were evidently bent on a screaming match, and the lady had unquestionably the best of it.

That excellent basso, Henry Phillips, unlike many of his operatic colleagues—Templeton, for instance—could not only sing, but act; and was therefore a great card both to the librettist and to the musical composer. Those who have had the good fortune to hear him sing "Farewell to the Mountain," and "The Light of other Days," are not likely to forget the treat enjoyed by them. These two airs became extraordinarily popular, and I remember hearing a parody of the latter, entitled, "The Hat of other Days," sung in an embryo music-hall. Phillips published two volumes of entertaining reminiscences, to which his portrait—an admirable likeness—is prefixed. He appears to have had no slight opinion of his own artistic merit, for in a letter formerly in my possession, addressed to a provincial friend, he announces his approaching visit on a professional tour, and concludes by saying: "Mind and insert in your local paper a paragraph to the effect that the 'celebrated' Mr. Phillips, of Drury Lane Theatre, is expected next week. A little judicious puffing can do no harm."

Among Phillips's most eminent colleagues, during the run of the "Mountain Sylph," at the English Opera House, none enjoyed a greater share of public favour than Miss Emma Romer, the original Eolia of Barnett's opera, and the talented representative of the same composer's "Fair Rosamond." She had a sweet but not very powerful voice, and sang with taste and feeling; the famous trio, "This magic-wove scarf," the gem of the work, faultlessly rendered by her, Wilson (an excellent Donald), and Henry Phillips—never failed to elicit an enthusiastic encore. Miss Romer subsequently married a Mr. Almond, but continued to act under her maiden name until her retirement from the stage. She died in 1868, in her fifty-fourth year.

Another Emma, of more cosmopolitan celebrity, Miss Howson, better known as Madame Albertazzi, made her mark in Italy at an early age as a singer of great promise, and, after reaping golden opinions at the San Carlo and at Madrid, was engaged, in 1835, by the manager of the Italian Opera in Paris, and during three years sang alternately in that city and in London. Madame Albertazzi was an extremely pretty and lady-like woman, and

her voice left little to be desired, either as regarded extent or sweetness of tone; but the effect of her singing was constantly marred by a listlessness of manner and an absolute lack of animation, which acted depressingly on her hearers and prevented her from ever attaining the highest rank in her profession. In 1838 she joined an English opera company at Drury Lane, and for some weeks drew good houses in "La Gazza Ladra." Soon after, her voice began to lose its freshness, and from that period her health gradually declined. In 1846 I heard her for the last time at the Princess's as Adina in "L'Elisir d'Amore"; Paul Bedford—a very inefficient substitute for Lablache—being the Dulcamara. She was then but a faint shadow of her former self, and died in September of the following year, aged only thirty-four.

In 1844 I was present at the first performance of Balfe's "Daughter of St. Mark," not by any means one of his best works, but containing two airs: "Oh, smile as thou wert wont to smile," and "We may be happy yet," both sung by the tenor, Harrison, which soon became extraordinarily popular, and as a matter of course were annexed by every barrel organist in London. In these and other ballads by the same composer, Harrison's success was incontestable; his voice, remarkably pure in quality, was melodious, and, above all, sympathetic, and to this natural gift incessant study had added a clear and distinct delivery and a thoroughly artistic refinement of expression and style. As in the case of most tenor singers within my recollection, his histrionic capabilities were extremely moderate, and the phrase, "vox, et præterea nihil," might, as a general rule, have been correctly applied to him. But on one occasion he fairly startled me, and, strange to say, in the most ungrateful part of the operatic repertory, that of Pollione in "Norma." On the production of an Anglicised version of Bellini's masterpiece at Covent Garden, in November, 1841, inspired, it is presumable, by the example of one of the greatest lyric artists of her time, Adelaide Kemble, he threw off his customary apathy, and sang and acted as he had never done before, and probably never did again. It was a revelation, and a totally unexpected one.

The mention of Charles Kemble's marvellously gifted daughter recalls to me the enthusiasm of an enraptured audience on that eventful night, the frantic waving of hats and the ringing shouts of applause

from every nook and corner of the densely crowded house. I have witnessed many such demonstrations in my time, but never one more spontaneously cordial and sincere. Adelaide Kemble deserved all this, and more. She was incomparably the best English singer that had graced the stage for many a year—a perfect mistress of her art, displaying in every character assumed by her a combination of vocal and dramatic excellence, such as few have ever equalled and none surpassed. The remembrance of her brief but glorious professional career will always be to me an unfading pleasure of memory; and with her honoured name these reminiscences of bygone days may appropriately be closed.

THE LATE MRS. VERNON.

By A. MOBERLY.

Author of "Lady Valeria," etc., etc.

CHAPTER IX.

COLONEL FORTESCUE stood leaning against the mantelshelf, looking thoughtfully into the blaze. It was but a few steps from the window to my chair by the fireside, but as I took them I debated the whole question of my position in my mind, and came to a resolution. I would attempt no confession now. Within a few hours he must be in possession of my letter. I would use the time left me to gain knowledge of the manner in which Muriel might be aided, if such a chance were still left to me. No, I could not give up this one last hour.

"What do you think of your daughter?" were his first words.

"Of Muriel? Ah, it would take too long to say," I began lightly, but my voice broke and the tears rushed to my eyes.

"I was afraid she might have struck you as—not exactly unkind but hard—just a little hard, when she spoke of her father, and perhaps more worldly wise than is natural, but you must make excuses. She has lived all her life on the defensive, poor child. You will change all that. I have never seen her so moved and excited as to-day. Think of it—she has never had a woman to love her before."

"Her aunt, or the Lady Principal?"

"Mrs. Vipont is an excellent woman, smart and business-like; I have a great respect for her; not an inch of motherly

fibre in her composition, though; and Miss Honor Vernon—well, you know what she was, my dear—little bitter weed! She was the same to the last, doing her duty by Muriel in keeping her safe from her father, but nothing more, I believe she actually disliked the girl——"

"Visiting the sins of the mother on the child. Is Bertram's father doing the same? Do not give yourself the pain of telling me. I have guessed how it is. Muriel's mother is the curse of Muriel's life. What man in his senses would let his son take the daughter of such a woman to wife? Ah, Colonel Fortescue, would not you give thanks to hear that the poor wretch can do no more mischief—that she lies quiet in her grave and can trouble you no more? If it were the other woman who escaped and she who had died——"

"No, no!" he cried, without a moment's hesitation. "Don't think such a thing. It would be the cruellest misfortune of Muriel's life. Never mind what is past and gone—you are all she has, and you stand between her and Tom Vernon."

He walked agitatedly towards me and sat down beside my chair.

"It makes a coward of me to think what I have to say to you and how you may take it. I have even tried to persuade myself that I have no right to interfere at all; but for Muriel's sake——"

"Let us keep to that," I answered him earnestly, laying a cold, untrembling hand on his as I spoke. "Think of Mrs. Vernon as dead and gone; that you are speaking to her ghost, her poor wandering spirit, long past every earthly feeling but love for Muriel. Speak to me boldly. I shall not cry nor faint. The bitterest words you can use will not touch me. I am a dead woman, only called back to the living world for Muriel's sake."

"This is morbid, morbid," he muttered under his moustache. "Dead? No such thing! You have your life before you, and now that you have been brave enough to come forward and face it there is no reason why it should not be a happy one. You will begin again from this moment, promise me. Let us help you to forget the miserable past——" He checked himself, for I held up my hand imperatively.

"Let us speak of nothing but Muriel. What was I wanted for in the first instance?"

"It was Bertram's father, old Admiral Gordon, who insisted on it. 'Any one can understand Tom Vernon's wife running

away from him,' he says, 'but not leaving her child in his clutches. Let her come forward like an honest woman and tell me her own story face to face. I shall know whether to believe it or not.' He is a stubborn old boy; won't even see Muriel or listen to a word of my explanations; but now you are here it will be all right. You will satisfy Gordon and put Muriel safe under the Lord Chancellor's care, and when Bertram comes back from his next cruise, why, we'll have a wedding, and all live happy ever after!"

He stopped, for he saw in my face the spasm of pain that shot through me. I wrung my hands in unavailing regret. "Why cannot I do this thing for you?" I said, half sobbing. He caught some of the words.

"What! You are frightened? No wonder. What an idiot I am, letting you think that we are going to leave you to bear the brunt of all the trouble and the scandal that Tom Vernon may raise if he chooses. I ought to have explained first thing how we—the Gordons and I—had planned to make it safe for you. I do not pretend there is no danger. Tom Vernon openly declares that he would go any lengths to get you back——"

"I am not afraid of Mr. Vernon," I declared with a sort of gloomy triumph. "He can do nothing to me. He has no power and no right——"

"No right! My dear lady, he has every right that the law allows. Every right that a husband has over his wife!"

His dismay was so evident that it confused me. "Divorced," I murmured, with my head bent down.

"Divorced! What do you mean? There was never a divorce at all. He is your veritable, lawful husband. What have you been told? What misapprehension have you been living under?"

The room seemed to turn round with me. Then I went to the writing-table on which the parcel of Mrs. Vernon's papers lay, and brought them to him. The light was waning at our end of the room. I lighted a candle and placed it near him.

"Will you look over these? I know nothing more than what is in them."

He looked as perplexed as myself over the bills.

"What does all this mean?" he muttered as he turned them about. His face grew darker and darker as the anonymous notes rustled through his fingers.

"Who sent you these?" he broke out

angrily. "Who was it that knew where to find you while I was searching for you in vain? A trick, a trick played in your husband's interests; and it succeeded too, did it not? You were frightened into running away, and stopping your ears, and shutting your eyes, and hiding where none of the friends who were ready to help you could find you. Foolish, worse than foolish, when you had Muriel to think of. You should have fought for your good name for her sake; but there—there—how should I know your side of the story?"

How, indeed, when I did not know it myself? The situation was getting too complicated for me to grasp. He glanced at the newspapers contemptuously.

"And you never sought to know more? You would have heard how the whole case collapsed—Tom Vernon and the lawyers alone know how. He wouldn't go into the witness-box; then the maid, Fanny Burrige, was nowhere to be found. Some said that you had spirited her away, others that Tom knew better than to let her appear. Then came poor Espinal's death and his last letter to Miss Honor. What? You had never heard of that?" He gave me a look of incredulous wonderment.

"It was the talk of the country. I followed him to Monte Carlo when I found I could do nothing for you in England, to beg him to help me to clear you. I was so sure, my dear, that he had nothing to tell that could hurt you. I was too late. His pride and his passion had been so cruelly wounded when you undecieved him, and he found it was from your husband's brutality you had fled, and that he was nothing to you, that I think his mind had become unhinged. He seemed half mad with rage, and disappointment, and drink. He had been playing high, too, and his luck was a nine days' wonder. But he behaved like a gentleman at the last. The letter he wrote to Miss Honor before he shot himself exonerated you completely, and Tom was the first to admit it."

The last words were said in a tone of bitter contempt that added to my bewilderment. We kept silence for a space, he apparently absorbed in some disagreeable reminiscences, I trying to fit these fragments in with the rest of the story, and watching now and then the two figures in the balcony, where the last glow of warm sunset still lingered.

"Surely," I said suddenly, catching at a chance of escape that seemed to offer itself,

"If, as you say, that letter was a complete exoneration—if Mr. Vernon accepted it—and—the divorce suit came to an end, why is not Admiral Gordon satisfied? Why must he see me?"

"I have put that to him as strongly as I could. I have his answer here," searching amongst some letters; "I brought it thinking you might ask that question. He says: 'The letter has no weight with me. It is only what a man like Espinal would think it a fine and chivalrous thing to do, to help the woman he was fond of in the only way left to him. Besides, you yourself admit that he was stark mad when he wrote it. As for Tom Vernon's opinion, there is no sin that his wife could commit that he wouldn't condone if she came back to him with her pockets well lined; and I hear that Mrs. Vernon gets all the West Indian estates as well as the Monte Carlo winnings—the devil's own coin with the blood-mark upon it.' I need not distress you by reading more. You see it is no use arguing with him. Espinal made his will before he left England, leaving everything to you, and I'll swear to his being sane when that letter was written, though there is no doubt he was mad, poor fellow, when he came to his terrible death afterwards. He's right about Tom. I wish I could disbelieve him. I could almost forgive Tom if I could imagine it was for yourself he wanted you and not for your lover's money. That a man can fall so low!"

There was honest grief mingled with the anger in his eyes.

"He was my friend once, you see," he said, with a sigh. "In the old days at school he stuck to me, and though I had to thrash him within an inch of his life once or twice to keep him straight, yet he bore no malice. It is the same now. Perhaps he only looks upon me as a foolish old man, useful as a link between him and Muriel; but he won't break off with me, and when I think of him it is always as the Tom Vernon of old days, the good fellow that I always felt had it in him to be a bad fellow as well. Maybe if I had stuck by him I could have saved you both, but he is out of my hands now and into Levison's. Levison! A low adventurer of whom I've heard stories which should make any honest man refuse to be seen on the same side of the street with him! And he holds Vernon in his power—and Vernon holds Muriel!"

The Colonel's speech really ended with

a good strong expletive under his breath red-hot from his heart, not intended for my ears. I mentally added, "Amen!"

Again we sat in silence—a long, sympathetic silence—during which I was well content to sit in the shadow studying his handsome stern face, that softened gradually to its usual frank, genial expression.

"We shall make her safe now, thanks to you. You will be ready on Monday, eleven punctually? You will allow me to call for you with Muriel? I suppose she had better come. I must take her away now, it is time."

I could not let him go thus. "Wait—one moment," I pleaded. "That letter I spoke of. You ought to read it first."

"I will go to my rooms and get it on our way to the station."

"Do. It will explain—what I cannot tell you now." Something seemed clutching at my throat while I spoke and stopping my words. "It is the truth every word. We are all in a horribly false position. Perhaps I may never see you or Muriel again, but you will try to forgive me—"

"Forgive you?" He looked alarmed and puzzled—no wonder—but asked no more, for the window opened and Muriel peeped in.

"Must we go? So soon!" she exclaimed. "But we shall meet again, and then soon—very soon, Miles says—I may have you for ever and always, my own mother darling!" she cried, with her arms round my neck—while I—ah, how my spirit fainted within me at the anguish of this last parting, while my lips refused to frame the farewell which I knew must be for ever.

CHAPTER X.

THEY had passed out of my life for ever, all three, and the worst was over now. So I told myself, sitting drearily over the fire. I had played my part to the end according to my lights; well or ill, it was over, over, over! I repeated the word again and again, each time with sharper pain.

Muriel, my darling! I felt her warm kisses on my cheek, and her arms around me still. I had gained her love and caresses by fraud, but was unrepentant. Had not Muriel said I was the very mother she would have chosen? Then I fell to musing how it would have been had the veritable Mrs. Vernon stood in

my place. Poor soul, I believed her honest, but also capable of doing the very foolishest thing in any emergency—Colonel Fortescue's story showed as much. What chance would there have been for Muriel's interests confided to her baby hands?

"What chance is there now?" some mocking demon whispered in my ear. "You, by your ill-advised candour, have put it out of your power to afford her even the shadow of protection. What did Colonel Fortescue say? 'You are all she has. You, and you alone stand between her and Tom Vernon.' And you have given her up to him."

"But I was bound in honour to tell the truth——"

"Honour!" scoffed the demon. "Punctilio! Your mind has been weakened by illness—Dr. Walsham cannot be altogether wrong—and you have brooded over your temporary alias till you have become a monomaniac. You have kept to the name and character of the late Mrs. Vernon just as long as it suited your own convenience, and yet flinch from holding it for a few days longer when it is of vital importance to another that you should do so. How else can you help Muriel?"

I had no answer to make. I was so wretchedly ignorant of all that it most imports that a woman should know concerning her rights and her duties, that I could not tell whether any one but the mother had a right to interpose between father and child, or even how far the mother's authority extended.

"Suppose," the demon went on seductively—"there is no harm in supposing—that you had let them all have their own way. You were asked to do nothing but sit with your hands folded and accept the life that they were shaping for you. Dr. Walsham and the whole hospital staff would agree that the days of your life as Elizabeth Margison are all a delusion. You cannot recollect your old name—your husband—your home? What of that? The medical profession can furnish similar instances by the score. Only the maternal instinct is aroused when you are brought into contact with your daughter. Deny it if you can. Why not give in to the opinion of wiser heads than yours? Are you afraid of Mr. Vernon—of the husband whom you have forgotten? They are all as anxious as yourself to keep you apart. Colonel Fortescue has assured you that you are safe, at least for the present. When your work is done, when

you have given Muriel into secure keeping, you are at liberty to go your own way and disappear out of their lives again."

The demon was excellent company. I was so sure of having put it out of my power to yield to his suggestions that I could allow myself to dream in the fire-light over his picture of what might have been. I aimed at no earthly advantage for myself—no future of ease and joy. These last brief days had held enough to glorify the remainder of my poor meagre life. For what had come to me I gave thanks, and was meekly content to take up the old life again, brightened now and then by a secret glimpse of my darling or of Miles Fortescue. He would give me a kindly thought now and then when I had vanished, like the ghost that I was.

At his very name the demon seemed discomfited, as if it had been a drop of holy water. Colonel Fortescue knew the truth. He had read my letter by this time; he had promised to believe me; he——

The spell was broken, or I thought so. My landlady entered with a note on a salver, and made a little commotion, lighting up candles, mending the fire. Then she hurried down again at the sound of a loud knock and ring.

I felt dimly aggrieved at the dispersion of my fancies, and unwilling to come back to the outside world again. I turned the note over and over without opening it, wondering languidly who was likely to write to me. It had been left by hand, not posted. The envelope was a cheap tinted paper one, and the address was in a neat business hand. I had a queer feeling at my finger-tips as I tore it open that I should come upon something distasteful, but I wasn't given time enough to see. The door flew open again, this time to admit Dr. Millar. I was so startled at the sight of him that I dropped the note unopened.

"Is anything wrong? Has Kitty come back?"

"No, no; don't be alarmed. I was obliged to come up to town on some unexpected business, and thought I'd look in, that's all," he said, shaking hands rather flurriedly. "I'm going back by the next train—or I think so——"

This was so unlike his usual precise, deliberate manner, that I grew more and more uneasy, though I tried not to let him see it.

"Does Kitty think I can't get on with-

out her? Tell her I'm managing famously. I've been giving a luncheon-party since you left. Colonel Fortescue has been here. He brought my daughter Muriel to see me."

"My daughter." How did that slip out? The demon only knew.

"Colonel Fortescue!" He looked relieved. "Then you have seen him, and I sincerely trust my carelessness has done no harm. That letter you gave me to post—I cannot imagine how it happened—Kitty took it out of the pocket of my great-coat, or, she took out something—we shall never know what—and posted it instead. I never put the coat on again till to-day, and coming up in the train I found it."

He made this slightly confused statement plain by holding out, with a hang-dog air, my own letter to Colonel Fortescue!

"I went at once to his rooms, but they said he was from home, and they didn't know when he might be expected, so I wouldn't leave it there without your orders. I went to his club to see if he had been there by any chance, and got his Hertfordshire address. Has he come back to town, or shall I follow him down to Hertfordshire with it? There is no post there on Sundays, perhaps."

He was so genuinely distressed—poor little extra particular man that he was—at Kitty's most characteristic blunder, that I could do naught but console him by declaring that it was of no importance; and at last he departed reassured.

The letter lay intact on my table, and in my ear the demon suddenly whispered: "Your chance; take it!"

The burning coals in the grate crashed inwards suddenly, leaving a great glowing

gulf with a heart of flame. I looked at the letter and then at the fiery little furnace. "The only proof," whispered the demon. "Away with it!"

In sheer terror of myself—of that new self, all unknown to me, that was developing daily full of new moods and impulses—I turned and stood with my back to the letter, wondering what excuse I could make for ringing for Mrs. Brent. I longed for some sane, human companionship. The neglected note crackled under my foot. I picked it up and opened it at last.

"MADAM (it ran),—Martha Pexton presents her respectful compliments to Mrs. Vernon, and has something particular to show her. I will take the liberty of calling between eleven and twelve to-morrow if Mrs. V. will give her word of honour as a lady to keep the visit quite private. If Colonel Fortescue or any other living creature knows, the business is at an end, and you will repent it to the last day of your life. With Mrs. Vernon, and with Mrs. Vernon only, will I have any dealings."

"Respectfully yours,

"MARTHA PEXTON.

"Think twice before refusing, for Miss Muriel's sake."

"For Muriel's sake!" I had grown to look upon the words as ominous—as a spell which I must needs obey, and which was drawing me farther and farther along the dark road of deception. "Mrs. Vernon, and Mrs. Vernon only."

"What shall I do?" I cried aloud.

"Another chance!" laughed the demon. "Take it—for Muriel's sake!"

But it was Martha Pexton's letter that I dropped into the glowing cinders.

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MISS LATIMER OF BRYANS.

By ELEANOR C. PRICE.

Author of "Alexia," "Red Towers," "The Little One," etc.

CHAPTER XV. CHARING CROSS.

LUCY THORNE did not quite know the Rector after all. He had not been in the train five minutes before she had disappeared from his mind as a human being, and he only remembered the expression of her strong face as she said: "He has taken a revolver."

On the way to London he was worried by many and distracting thoughts. To begin with, this sort of precipitate action was quite unlike him, and as soon as the first impulse was over, doubts and scruples began to crowd into the field. Why had he led that good woman to suppose that he would or could bring her brother back? Most likely he would not find him—he might go from Victoria, or from Cannon Street, with the reasonable idea of throwing his family off the scent. And if he was found, why should he consent to come back? The Rector had no hold over him of any kind; he did not even know him as his parish priest. It was not, as far as one knew at present, a matter for the police, and therefore the Rector had no force, either moral or physical, to rely upon for help. Why was he starting off on such a wild goose chase? Then came back the remembrance of all Lucy Thorne had said and looked; of her half-veiled reproaches of Poppy Latimer; of those words, "He has taken a revolver." The uneasiness which seized again and again on Mr. Cantillon's mind, as he thought over all that, pushed him still irresistibly

in the direction in which the train was taking him. "Not mad, but miserable!" Poor fellow! And then there was the possibility, which had had a great deal to do with these sudden resolutions, that Poppy and her aunt might be spared some very serious annoyance if the young man's journey could be stopped. Why was he going back to Switzerland, if not to see her again!

Sitting in his comfortable corner, the Rector felt rather like a child who had undertaken to stop a locomotive engine, so unequal did he think himself, in these cooler moments, to encountering a human creature wild with love and despair. Yet, in these same cooler moments, though he called himself foolish and presumptuous for trying to interfere, the only alternative course still seemed impossible. He could not, that afternoon, have walked quietly back across the fields to his house; leaving Miss Thorne with nothing but sage words to comfort her; strolling up the garden, with small attentions to his flowers by the way; sitting down with Fanny's picture in the study; eating a peaceful dinner; reading an interesting book; going to bed with a comfortable, if rather sleepy conscience; while all the time that young man was tearing back to Switzerland, with a revolver in his pocket, and heaven knows what wild ideas in his head.

No; it was a case in which the shepherd must go after the strayed sheep. And yet—"Useless, perfectly useless—uncomfortable and absurd," the poor Rector muttered. "If I catch him, which is not likely, he will ask me what right I have to interfere."

And yet—to return to the child and the engine—a good deal may be done by waving a red flag. In short, the whole

question resolved itself into "Shall I catch him?" only to appear once more in all its separate elements, with an argument on every point, which lasted till the Rector arrived at Paddington.

He was not surprised at himself, though conflicts of this kind always disturbed and saddened him. He had never flattered himself that he possessed a decided or a courageous character. If he had, Fanny Latimer would have been his wife years ago. He always looked about him too much before taking an irrevocable step, and was naturally afraid of any sort of violent action. A quarrel, all his life, had been to him an impossibility. He would have been like the second of those dear old hermits in the story, who, when his brother wished, for the sake of experience, to teach him and himself how to quarrel for a stone, could find nothing to say but "If it be yours, then take it." At the same time it must be added that indolence of spirit had much more to do with Henry Cantillon's meekness than timidity.

He disliked London, and as he drove in his cab through streets beautiful with sunset, full of lovely effects of gold and purple mistiness which he was too much occupied to see, the futility of his mission impressed itself upon him more and more. Certainly he had been a ridiculous person to dream of catching one special young man in London. Such a thought could never have been born, except in the deepest depths of a rural country, in absolutely bucolic minds like poor Miss Thorne's and his own.

"Charing Cross! Now for two hours of noisy, interminable waiting, with a dead failure at the end of it."

As he stepped out of the cab, Geoffrey Thorne, with a small bag in his hand, walked into the station before him.

"Oh! Stop him!" exclaimed the Rector.

He did not speak very loud, but loud enough to make the cabman stare, to make a policeman advance two steps, to make a porter say quickly, "Which was the gentleman you wanted stopped, sir?"

All his life the delicate and thoughtful Oxford don had been loved by cabmen, by porters, by guards, by all those men who have been taught by long experience to "know a gentleman when they see him." The Rector saw that Geoffrey Thorne could be caught in a moment if he wished it. But he had hardly spoken when he remembered that, whatever happened, a scene in Charing Cross station must be avoided.

Why, the thing might get into the papers. The very slightest danger of such a misfortune, though it made him tremble at his own thoughtlessness, filled him with calmness and presence of mind. He told himself that success in this matter might be gained by quietness, and certainly in no other way.

"No, no, thank you," he said to the porter. "It doesn't matter. I want to speak to him, but I can overtake him easily."

It was now after half-past six; twilight was setting in, and the station was already lighted. The Rector's eyes were confused by the dim atmosphere, by the number of moving, hurrying figures, among which they now vainly looked for Geoffrey.

"Perhaps it was not my man after all!" he thought. "And if I do catch him, what am I going to say to him? It is certainly the most awkward business I ever was mixed up in. Ah! there he is again!"

His wandering eyes had discovered the man he took for Geoffrey standing at the bookstall, turning over the leaves of a book.

"Baying books! Come! that doesn't look like desperation."

As he walked slowly across from his stopping-place under the clock, it occurred to him for the first time that perhaps Miss Thorne might have made a string of mistakes about her brother; that he might, after all, have inherited the sturdy good sense of his family; that his return to Switzerland might be on some artistic business of his own, quite unconnected with Poppy Latimer; for after all, his home had been abroad for some years now, and all his chief interests lay probably in his art life there. To be sure, the revolver! and Mr. Cantillon had also the evidence of his own eyes, which had been startled by Geoffrey's face in old Mr. Farrant's parlour. But the possibility of such a great misunderstanding made him walk very cautiously, and assume, without knowing it, an extra serenity of look and manner. He did not wish to appear like a fool in Geoffrey Thorne's eyes.

The young man answered by a violent start, which hardly suggested a very good conscience, to "How do you do, Mr. Thorne?" softly spoken in quiet tones at his elbow.

It was Geoffrey, no doubt; and he looked very pale, ill, and depressed. He stared at the Rector at first without

knowing him, muttered something indistinct, and then said more clearly, "I think you are Mr. Cantillon."

"Your parson at home. Not much wonder if you did not remember me. We were in the same room for a few minutes yesterday, and that is all we have seen of each other."

"It is more wonderful that you should have known me," said the young man.

"I have a good memory for faces. And then, you know, I spent many years of my life at Oxford, and had a great many friends among undergraduates—who were all, of course, younger than you. But I often miss my friends. There are not many young men at Bryans—at least, not many that would care for my friendship. But I like young men—always did. And I see you and I have one taste in common, at any rate. I can never resist a bookstall. I have missed a train, once in my life, because I couldn't tear myself away. Take care you don't do the same."

"No danger," said Geoffrey. "I am going to Paris to-night, and my train does not start till 8.15."

He stood staring at the books, having laid down the volume he had been turning over.

"Wonderful, in a smoky place like this, how they manage to keep the books so clean. It does them the greatest credit," said Mr. Cantillon; and his own eyes followed Geoffrey's in a much more intelligent fashion, being drawn by a much stronger power.

There was something even more attractive, however, in the face and figure of the young man himself, expressing a depth of weary, stony sadness, which to ignorant eyes might have suggested indifference. Mr. Cantillon remembered vividly the bright face, with its healthy tint of reddish brown, and the clear, honest, happy eyes, which had been raised yesterday from the sketch just begun of Maggie Farrant's face, and the very first sight of which had given him a warm feeling of kindness and pleasure. Now the eyes were dim, dark, sunken, with purple marks under them, the skin seemed to have changed colour, becoming both sallow and grey, the cheeks had lost their healthy look and taken a sudden hollow-ness; the upright shoulders were drooped, the head was bent, the voice was tired and cold. Turning over books might not indeed seem a likely employment for a man in despair; but the more Mr. Can-

tillon studied Geoffrey, the more strongly he felt convinced that Miss Thorne had made no mistake about her brother. He might not be mad, he did not look mad, but miserable he certainly was. Such misery as could be read in his quiet face might very well, to some minds, suggest the way of escape that many thousands have found irresistible.

Mr. Cantillon's own expression grew graver as he watched him. Geoffrey did not seem to be aware that he was watched, or to wonder at all at the strange coincidence which had brought "his parson" to Charing Cross station that evening.

"Well, now, I suppose," began the Rector, more kindly and more nervously than before, "I suppose that you will not let these books fascinate you too much; for instance, you won't forget that you must dine before this long journey. I have an interested motive," he added hastily. "I am on my way to order my own dinner at the restaurant there, and it would be very pleasant—very agreeable for me—if we were to dine together."

"Thank you; I don't much think I want any dinner," said Geoffrey in a dull voice. "I have been knocking about all day, and I don't feel hungry."

"Come, come, no good man ever goes without his dinner," said the Rector with a sweet smile, "unless it is for the sake of the poor, or self-denial, or some good reason of that kind. On most days of the year a man's duty is to keep himself in working order. That is your duty this evening, Mr. Thorne. Now look here. If I go in and order dinner for us both, will you promise me to come and eat it?"

Geoffrey stared at him. A little wonder began to awake in his dreary soul; wonder at the Rector's extraordinary friendliness, not yet at the still stranger fact of his being there at all. Some men in Geoffrey's position might have felt bored and angry. Why could not the tiresome old fellow leave them alone? Geoffrey had no thought of this kind. Mr. Cantillon had been able to read into the depths of a character whose foundation was sweetness.

"You are very kind," he said dreamily.

He was going on to repeat that he wanted nothing, but the Rector interrupted him hurriedly.

"Not at all. I'm lonely, I'm sociable; I want a companion. Only tell me—shall I find you here when I come back?"

"All right, sir. I'll look out for you," said the young man more naturally; and

the Rector, with perfect confidence in his word, walked quickly away.

During the few minutes of his absence Geoffrey paced up and down near the bookstall, still thinking with wonder of the kindness which made these last hours of waiting a little more bearable. He felt so dull, so heavy, so tired; the sharp edge of his pain was wearing off, but the weight of it was more intolerable than ever. He thought, as people generally do, that no one had ever suffered quite such pain before. He did not blame her; that had been settled yesterday in the woods where those afternoon and evening hours had been spent, before he knew what to do, before the whole past and present and future lay clear before him. One could not lie for ever on one's face in dead leaves, if life was to go on at all. So he wandered home late in the evening, and escaped his family fairly well, and then lay awake all night thinking what he should do, but could not decide on the very best thing till after breakfast in the garden. Then it was easy to give them all the slip, to start off by the next train to London, and wait about till evening, for there was no Club train in those days. And now, without knowing it, he was weak and exhausted from hunger, for he had eaten nothing worth mentioning since their early dinner at the farm the day before.

When the Rector came back, Geoffrey followed him quite meekly into the restaurant, and took his place opposite to him in one of the compartments at the end of the room, which had been prepared for them.

He looked across the table at the Rector eating his soup, and as his own brain was a little strengthened by food, he found himself wondering why Lucy in her letters had never told him what a beautiful face Mr. Cantillon had, or how charming his manners were, or how he gave one, as very few men do, the impression of perfect refinement of nature, as well as perfect cultivation.

The Rector himself, who was not too happy or too nervous to enjoy his dinner—he had ordered the best the restaurant could supply—watched, without seeming to do so, a certain life, a certain interest in outward things returning to the deep hazel eyes that now looked at him with a little curiosity. He gave no credit to himself, but all to poor Geoffrey's dinner; this was no distress to his gentle philo-

sophy. He talked to him about ordinary things—politics, his father's farming, the beauties of Oxford—and the young man answered with fair intelligence, though slowly and with an effort.

"And that revolver! Which pocket is it in?" thought the astute Rector as he watched his captive. "I hope we may get through this crisis without help from that little infernal machine, my dear fellow!"

Presently he asked Geoffrey if he preferred figure to landscape painting.

"Yes, I think I do," the young man answered. "I believe I should, that is. But the study is a much more serious matter, you know, and I could never very well afford models. So I gave up the thought of figure many years ago. Yes, of course, it is more interesting. Anything human must be."

He looked down suddenly, as if he had received a sudden stab of pain. It was the remembrance of something that Poppy had said to him that moonlight evening in the orchard at Herzheim.

Mr. Cantillon saw that a sore place had been touched, he did not quite know how. But, after all, this must happen over and over again if he was to gain his point and stop this journey. The time was slipping by, too, and he did not see his way more clearly than at first.

"But you have painted portraits?" he said. "That likeness of Miss Farrant—it struck me as being cleverly begun. I think you will make a nice thing of that."

"Do you?" said Geoffrey wearily. "No—I have tried a few sketches of heads, but never succeeded in anything—never satisfied myself. I don't suppose that will ever be finished."

"I hope so," said the Rector. "It is a pretty face, and will make a pretty picture. Of course I am ignorant, but it seemed to me that you had already caught the general effect, and very cleverly. A soft, pretty head, rather foreign-looking. The complexion and hair are certainly foreign. They are singular people. You don't know them very well, I suppose?"

"No," said Geoffrey; "I used to see them sometimes, years ago. Mr. Farrant is a queer old man. He is picturesque. He would make a fine portrait."

"I doubt if he would allow himself to be painted," said the Rector. "Now, Miss Maggie enjoys it, and he enjoys it for her. He was quite disappointed yesterday, I think, when you went off in such a hurry."

"Was he?" said Geoffrey. He added, after a pause: "It always seems to me strange that he should be a clergyman."

"Very strange. I believe he was a tradesman's son—a clever lad, and they sent him to Cambridge. I don't mean that there was anything strange in that—the instances are many—but I always fancy that it would have been more natural for a man of his harsh and curious character to turn to the law, or science—anything in fact but the Church. However, in his day, it was the easiest way a clever man had to advancement. Not that he profited by it. I believe after his marriage he took a small parish in the Fens, but always disliked parish work, and gave it up as soon as his father died and left him some money. He had an only son, who was very wild, married badly and died young. The wife and the daughter-in-law both died, and after that my predecessor came to the rescue, you know—poor old Mr. Martin—and installed him and his books and his grandchild in Bryans Rectory. They were college friends. Mr. Martin was something of an oddity: but you know more about that than I do."

"He was, indeed," said Geoffrey.

Mr. Cantillon's gentle voice fascinated him. The annoyance of his first allusion to the girl's portrait seemed to be softly brushed away by these reminiscences, and Geoffrey, looking more like himself, forgot his own trouble so far as to tell one or two funny stories of his father's adventures with the old Rector when rates or subscriptions had to be collected. Mr. Cantillon listened with a smile. He had heard the stories before from William Thorne himself, who delighted in telling them, but he did not think it necessary to confess that.

At last, when dinner was quite done, when Geoffrey's eyes were a little brighter, and a tinge of colour had come back to his brown face, and he had smiled more than once, even almost laughed, over the old parish tales, and his first surprise at Mr. Cantillon's kindness had settled down into a strong and genuine liking for him; when the Rector, seeing all this, began to think that the time was come for speaking seriously, he was seized and vanquished by a sudden fit of nervous hesitation. It seemed now that he could have spoken better at first, when the atmosphere was tragical and the situation strained. It was certainly more difficult now that Geoffrey Thorne had lost some of the out-

ward appearance of trouble, and looked and spoke more like an ordinary young man. The Rector's heart seemed to be beating in his throat—he was as nervous as a girl. He turned so pale that Geoffrey, looking at him with interest, bent suddenly forward with eager eyes and said: "I beg your pardon, you don't feel ill?"

"No, no; many thanks!" said the Rector, smiling, and instantly recovering himself. "This room may be rather hot, perhaps."

"It is awfully hot. Shall we go outside?" said Geoffrey. "It must be nearly time for me to get my ticket."

"Wait a minute. I must have the bill."

Geoffrey was really annoyed when he found that the Rector considered the bill entirely his affair. But something in the elder man's manner prevented much dispute, and in answer to Geoffrey's remarks as they went out, he said: "I asked you to dine with me. I only wish it had been at Bryans; but that is to come."

He walked along the platform very slowly. Geoffrey, now thinking more of him than of himself, glanced at him with a little anxiety, and suddenly, for the first time, began to wonder where he might be going. Did he, too, want a ticket for the Continental train? If that was the case, Geoffrey did not know whether to be glad or sorry. His feelings would hardly have been a riddle in the case of any one else, but the Rector's conquest of his new friend was fast becoming complete.

THE PENALTIES OF GREATNESS.

THERE is one thing on which we may congratulate ourselves—we who are little—we have escaped the penalties of greatness. That is something. We at least may call our souls our own. We may have a taste for onions, raw, or fried, or baked, or boiled, or anyhow, and yet the world shall not wonder at the grossness of our appetites. I saw in an Australian journal the other day that a certain English actress has a taste for porter. We may thank our stars, we little ones, that the fact of our having a taste for porter is not flashed round the electric girdles of the globe. Smith, who passes his days soaking at the bar of the "Tippler's Tryst," may congratulate himself that he belongs to the family of the unknown Smiths. Nobody cares how much he soaks, except his wife and family. Smith cares nothing for what

they think. Here, in a French paper lying at my side, is recorded the fact that a well-known politician is compelled to wear a particular kind of boot, owing to a peculiarly troublesome corn which he has on his big toe. Great Harry! Think if the eyes of the world—those million Argus eyes—were on the corn on my big toe!

Greatness is a thing which has to be paid for; and the bill which has to be paid is a bill which continually needs repaying. The debtor can never liquidate it once and once for all; never, either living or dead. It is hard to become eminent; it is harder still to keep eminent when you are eminent. A man who becomes great in any walk of life forfeits the birthright of every Englishman—he ceases to be free. It is possible that he may become little again; it is probable, indeed, that he will. Few men continue great their whole lives long; but in spite of his return to the ranks of the little, years, nay, centuries afterwards, some one will claim the right to make a meal off him because he once was great. Though he be an Egyptian mummy his account shall still be running! The man who, while the breath is still in his body, becomes great, is no longer able to live his own life. He becomes sport for the hounds. They follow him, not only to his death, but long afterwards—through the ages! Think of that, ye failures, and give thanks!

A great poet, weighted with the weight of years, seeks solitude in a remote part of the country, desirous to live his own life—what is left of it. But the world will not let him if it can help it. His most ardent admirers are those who take the most frequent shots at him; they come thousands of miles to do it. They cannot let him alone. Immortal fame is to them what honey is to bees—they must cluster round to take a bite at it. A great philosopher has to seek refuge in boarding-houses under an alias; but still they chivy him. Some one detects the likeness, and again the hounds are on his track. Artist, author, actor, singer, inventor, politician—become a remarkable person of any sort and you will have a remarkable time of it. Even quite third-rate people have remarkable times; what sort of times must the truly great ones have! If you desire to win your way in literature you must do something else besides write—a great deal more. Some journals, of declared high standing, are beginning to make a rule of

publishing certain matter not only over the signature of the author but under his portrait. It is no good sending work to them, however good, unless you are prepared to make your features public property. You will receive applications for a few "biographical details." The applicant will resent it if you decline, and if you have baulked his desire to construct a "par" at your expense, will, possibly, express his sense of your "discourtesy" in good clear print. He will be safe to "bag" you either way. You will receive requests for your autograph from persons whom you do not know, and do not want to know. If you do not send it they will be amazed. They "enclosed" a stamped and addressed envelope and a blank sheet of paper. Do you want a pen and ink as well? Everybody sends his autograph nowadays. The great Blank sends his—always, to every one. The impertinence of such a nobody as you declining!

But these are but the minor worries of the third or the fourth-rate man, the actor at twenty pounds a week, or the author of the latest shilling dreadful. They are nothing to the worries of the truly great. The more eminent the man the less his personal freedom. There is, to my mind, something not altogether satisfactory in the contemplation of that plain truth. It is as though we set up a god and placed him on a lofty pinnacle, and set him apart and kept him there. How much better off are we little ones in the green pastures far beneath!

Think, for instance, of the things which we can do, and which, say, Mr. Gladstone or the Marquis of Salisbury cannot. We may take a hand at penny nap every night of our lives, or even shilling nap, if we have shillings in our purses, and who shall say us nay! We should, very properly, regard that person as an interfering ass who, in our hearing, criticised our pursuits. If he were so foolish as to attempt to prevent our playing nap, there would, not impossibly, be a case of assault and battery, and a verdict of serve him right. But let Mr. Gladstone or the Marquis of Salisbury play a nightly game of nap, and let the fact of their doing so be known, and it is quite on the cards that hundreds of thousands of hands will be stretched out to hurl them where a recently deceased Irishman was hurled. We can be guilty of a hundred peccadilloes, and we are guilty of them every day. We are in a chronic state of guilt. I am bound to own I am! But no

one thinks a penny the worse of us. But let Mr. Gladstone be found out in one—lord, what a hubbub would be raised! We little ones know that this is a world of give and take; that we are but human; that it is human to err. But in the case of a great man we decline to allow that he is human. His is a case in which the one rift in the lute makes all the music mute. Let him fall away in one thing, he falls away in all things.

In the eyes of myriads of person the one thing ill done wipes out the memory of a dozen things well done. That is one of the penalties of greatness. And it shall be the same with him for generations after he has gone. Through all history shall loom the shadow of that ill deed, overshadowing the good. And who shall be the judge of evil—you or I? Smith, of the unknown Smiths, shall drink himself to death, and beat his wife, and leave his creditors unpaid, and they shall record his virtues on his tombstone, and declare that he was no one's enemy but his own; for men have much charity for the little, though they have none for the great.

How any one should ever desire to become an eminent politician passes one's comprehension. It is amazing. He is everybody's slave. He is the slave of his party, he is the slave of the wire-pullers, he is the slave of the press, he is the slave of the great British public. Let him refuse obedience to any one of his owners, and before he can say Jack Robinson he is out of the running, smashed, done for. We are told from the housetops that the great Mr. Blank is going to make a declaration of his policy—his policy, mind. I doubt if the great Mr. Blank has very much to do with the declaration or the policy either. It is the party which wants the policy; it is the wire-pullers who inform him that the moment is opportune for its declaration; it is the press which has warned him of the direction in which the wind is blowing; it is the great British public from which he receives the doctrine, hot pressed, cut, and dried, which he is to preach. One may venture to doubt if he ever had a policy which he could legitimately call his own—he would scarcely be the great Mr. Blank if he had. It is the rank and file of the party who have policies, ideas, theories of their own. The great Mr. Blanks are like sponges. They are sodden with moisture which they receive from every side. It is rained on them from a thousand

waterspouts. This mixture of all the rains of all the heavens, when squeezed out, by their several proprietors, drop by drop, is called their policy. Surely an eminent, a truly eminent, politician is the most wonderful work of man.

The great Mr. Blank's life, while he is the great Mr. Blank, is mapped out for him with almost mathematical accuracy by his owners. He is instructed to address such and such an assemblage on such and such a day, and he is instructed what to say. Let him fall short of their requirements in but one jot or tittle, he has taken a step towards suicide. He is the mouthpiece of other men. They expect to hear their opinions proceeding from his lips. If they don't, they will go to the man from whom they do. Suppose the Marquis of Salisbury, or Mr. Gladstone, were, this night, to become conscientiously convinced that the party of which he is the mouthpiece is the party of false doctrines, and had the courage to say so. What howls there would be from a hundred platforms! Does any one doubt that the men who deify to-day would crucify to-morrow? Each particular section of the British public likes to have its own particular piper, and it insists on calling the tune. Let the piper play a tune of his own, there is a sudden change of pipers!

Then there are the multitudinous small things which, as a little man, one would suppose must press heavily upon an eminent politician. He must be civil to all men—civiller, perhaps, to the fools, than to any. The fools he has always with him—always. The eminent politician must serve as the especial butt to a vast and wonderful array of bores. How he must despise the large majority of his so-called followers! With what scorn he must regard them in his heart! And yet how he has to go out of his way to solicit the favour of their vote and interest! How he has sometimes to palter with a lie—he must have! How he has to be all things to all men! He is an actor as much as any actor that ever trod the mimic stage, and, be he sick or sad, he has to give satisfaction to the audience in front, if he would keep his situation. He has to struggle and strive to keep in his hands the ends of fifty different strings which are being pulled in fifty different directions, and to preserve his balance and his head amidst them all.

And what is the end of it? What is the reward of the eminent politician?

It is when one considers this question that one is amazed to think that any man should think it worth his while to pay the penalties of political greatness. To begin with, the ingratitude of party is proverbial. One need go no further back in search of an example than the first Lord Iddeleigh; instructive stories have been told of the ingratitude which was shown towards him. The late Robert Lowe did something for his party once upon a time. What did his party ever do for him? But the examples which, on a moment's reflection, occur to one's mind are too numerous to mention. A man may, and frequently does, give all—time, money, intellect, his whole life—to the so-called public service, to be shelved at last.

And suppose he is not shelved; suppose, that is, he dies in harness. What then?

We are told regularly, periodically told, that the eminent politician earns his country's gratitude. We have much to be thankful for, we little ones, but we have indeed cause to be truly thankful that we are not destined to earn such gratitude as that. How many politicians, say, during the last century, may be said to have earned their country's gratitude? How many out of the great multitude of politicians? Is there one? Is there one man of whom his countrymen are willing to say, with an even nearly unanimous voice, "we owe that man our heart-felt gratitude; it is his; we give it him." As they sometimes cry in the arena of his former struggles, "Name! Name!" Doubtless every man Jack of those extinct eminent politicians—for extinct they are as the dodo, to all practical intents and purposes—has his followers, as he had them then. And equally true it is that he has his opponents, quite in the good old way. What sort of gratitude is it which consists in being set up by one set of men for another set of men to knock you down? Those eminent politicians have handed on their wrangles to our eminent politicians. We are wrangling just on the same old lines. If we look deeply into the matter we shall begin to doubt if we have advanced much farther than they did. We are making the same old plunges into the same old lucky bag.

And so when one, not being a professional politician, looks at the question widely, and considers the penalties of political greatness, one begins to wonder whether politics have that influence on the real life of a nation which they are sup-

posed to have, and whether eminent politicians are not merely the puppets of the hour. But that is a question on which the Fates forbid that we should enter!

Probably in no case are the penalties of greatness so irksome as in the case of the eminent politician. But every great man has to pay his own particular penalty as the price of his greatness. He lives in the public eye, and he who lives in the public eye is the occupant of a very undesirable place of residence. And yet there are people who like to live in the public eye. There are people who yearn, and strive, and struggle to pay all the penalties of greatness, and that without being great. This is really strange. They are willing to bear the cross without attaining the crown. The desire of these persons is to become notorious, and between notoriety and greatness there is a great gulf fixed.

It would be incredible that there could be a craze for notoriety, if it were not a well-established fact that that identical craze is the craze of the day. Mrs. Bustom wears silk stockings because her skin is so tender that she cannot endure cotton; if Mrs. Bustom can only be brought to believe that the world is interested in learning that, the summit of Mrs. Bustom's ambition is achieved. Angels and ministers of grace defend us! Think of Bustom! But the amazing fact of it is that Bustom revels in his wife's reflected splendour.

If Pouter can only induce a journal of established reputation to publish a paragraph to the effect that pigeon pie always gives him indigestion, Pouter's peace of mind is assured for weeks, even though the insertion of that paragraph cost him, possibly, five good sovereigns. These things are; it is not improbable that the editors of certain journals could, if they chose, tell some amazing stories in this direction. A man has been known to plume himself on being notoriously the greatest fool in town. A man has been known to pride himself on being well hung—by the neck, and not on the walls of the Academy. When public executions were discontinued, criminals objected to the change—they preferred to be hung with thousands looking on. The desire to achieve notoriety can scarcely go farther than that.

There are persons who desire notoriety simply for the purpose of obtaining a business advertisement—the author for his

book, the painter for his picture, the actor for his performance. But it is a query—with a strong leaning towards a negative reply—whether such persons can have any claim to greatness. The great man lets his work speak for itself. Mr. Scrawler is desirous that the fact of his being the possessor of a pretty taste for scarlet neckties should speak for him. The man who has a message to deliver derives satisfaction from the belief that it has gone, at least, partially home. But his satisfaction ceases when the receivers of his message begin to clamour for locks of his hair. It is by distributing locks of his hair that the advertising quack—whether actor, poet, or painter—seeks to persuade the world that he has a message to deliver.

Still, there are always two sides to a question. It is conceivable that a great, a really great man, of a certain type—for great men, like little men, are of every kind—can derive gratification even from the penalties of his greatness, while those penalties are fresh. It is when their freshness has worn off that he begins to realise that they are penalties which shall be with him always, and from which he never shall escape. Byron was delighted when he woke and found himself famous. It pleased him to know that his name was the topic of every tongue. He was amused, at least, to find himself the lion of the London season, the hero of the day. Then his pleasure was turned into pain; he had to pay the penalties of greatness. And he had to continue to pay them, with, as it were, his heart's blood, his whole life long.

Only a few years ago an American authoress wrung a monstrous payment from his ghost. We little ones are often as bad as, and worse than Byron, but, thank Heaven, no one is likely to attempt to wring payment from our ghosts.

Sir Walter Scott is, on the other hand, an example of a great man, who, so far as we can judge, enjoyed paying the penalties of his greatness, even in his hour of death. He was great enough, but then he was that kind of man, and the circumstances among which he lived were favourable. That was before the day of the penny post, of the electric telegraph, of railways, and of the interviewer; and in his prime he lived at Abbotsford, which is equivalent nowadays to saying that he lived at Joppa. He seems to have been singularly free from the penalties of greatness, which have enormously increased

since the Wizard of the North went home; and such of them as came in his way he seems to have heartily enjoyed. He appears, now and then, to have relished being turned into a raree show, and to being pointed at, wherever he went, as Walter Scott. Indeed, this being pointed at seems to have been relished by many men whose greatness was undoubted. Thackeray seems, sometimes, almost to have resented not being pointed at.

The question of enjoyment is a question of temperament. Some men like being made a fuss of so long as it doesn't go too far, which, unfortunately, it sometimes does. They like to see their photographs in the windows; they like to see their names in the papers; they even like to have opera-glasses levelled at them when they take their walks abroad—at any rate they like it now and then. But these very men will be the very first to tell you that there is another thing they like, and that is a limit. If you are in their confidence they will not improbably add, with some bitterness, that a limit is exactly the thing which the world dislikes. An opera-glass is very well in the park or at the theatre, but there are times when one would rather that an opera-glass should not be brought to bear upon one. Unhappily these are exactly the times in which the world longs and strains to use it. We see this to advantage in America. President Cleveland was on his honeymoon. There are moments in a man's honeymoon in which he would almost rather be alone with *her*. But the American newspapers would not have it. They hunted him and his bride from pillar to post, into his house and out of it. When there were signs of an "osculatory concussion," every paper throughout the Union had it in headlines. Were we little ones American citizens, we should be actuated by principles of true wisdom and real piety, were we to add a clause of our own to the Litany: "From being President of the United States, good Lord deliver us." The penalties of Presidential greatness are almost more than mortal man can bear.

But the Union Jack has points of contact with the Stars and Stripes. Not long since an English artist wrote to an English evening journal complaining of the incorrectness of an "interview" which its reporter had forced upon him. The reporter—a complete stranger to the artist, who had shown himself into the artist's studio while the artist was in the

middle of his work—replied that the incorrectness of the report was owing to the incivility with which he had been received. The proverbial courtesy of the American press could scarcely go much further than that!

The truth is that it is all very well to be lionised when you want to be lionised, and the first request which a sprouting author receives for his autograph he very possibly answers on four sides of a sheet of paper; but it is when you don't want to be lionised, and are sick of being asked for your autograph, that the penalties come in. One sometimes hears a little man exclaim of a great one—say at a public meeting—how proud he must feel of being the idol of this vast assembly! Ah, my friend, but think of the price he pays. You are in front of the stage, there is behind the scenes. Long before he reached the apex on which you now behold him, he was satiated with the plaudits of these vast assemblies. If he is a great man—if he is not, of a surety you need not envy him!—he knows exactly, to a decimal point, what those plaudits are worth. He knows, too, what they have cost him. He knows that when he has deserved them most he has received them least, and how they have been showered on him when his deserts were smallest. If to himself he has been true, he is pretty well indifferent to either praise or blame, he cares little either for the plaudits of the people, or for their hisses. If to himself he has not been true—well, my little friend, the great man shrugs his shoulders, and, with at least one eye, he winks.

And there you have it. It is from his work that a great man derives his satisfaction. A great man desires to do great work. It is natural that he should like his work to receive the approbation of those whose approbation is worth having. The mass of the people of this world are eternally playing the game of follow my leader. It is not unlikely that it will receive the at least simulated approbation of a number of people whose approbation is not worth having; and these are the people who will extort from him the penalties of greatness—yes, to the uttermost farthing! People of this sort seem to feel a species of proprietorship in the man whom they profess to admire; they crack the whip, and they expect him instantly to dance. If he is a dramatic author, these are the sort of people who call him before the curtain—and won't they hiss him if he declines to come! If he is

a politician, these are the sort of people who want him to express his opinion on the condition of Madagascar, at any rate upon a postcard—and don't they vote against him if he won't! If he is an author, they want his autograph, his photograph, a presentation copy of his works, his verdict upon their handwriting, upon things in general, and upon three thousand pages of their MS.—and won't they worry him till they attain the object of their heart's desire! If he is a painter—just a sketch! An actor—an order now and then! A singer—a free song at their “At Home!” A poet—a few impromptu verses in their album! An inventor—the secret of, well, at least one of his inventions! A General—a leg up for Harry! A Bishop—oh, won't he offer prayer? There is only one thing which these people do not want in connection with the great men whom they profess to admire. They don't want to let them alone.

It resolves itself into this. The people whose approbation is worth having are not the people who extort from great men the penalties of greatness. Unhappily—most unhappily—these people are in a lamentable minority. As the sands of the sea for multitude are the other kind. It is these people who are daily making it a more and more pressing question, whether it is worse for a man to be born great, or to have greatness thrust upon him.

A SUMMER'S NIGHT ABOUT LONDON.

ONCE in a while there comes a real summer's night, and more rarely a string of them in succession, when one is disposed to retract all hard sayings against our native climate, and to vow that nowhere can there be enjoyed more pleasant halcyon moments than on a summer's night, and in London. Yes, in London, for although there are summer nights doubtless in the country, are they not, on the whole, a little drowsy? The tinkling of the curfew “lulls the distant folds”; the weary ploughman crawls to bed in the twilight; there is a general going to roost in every direction, and when night really comes on, everything is still and lonely to a degree. But how differently things go in London.

It has been a hot day, perhaps, and the City has been like an oven; but now there is a peaceful glow over the house-tops,

thin curls of smoke take opalescent tints, and the steam from passing trains curls upwards in roseate masses. All the sounds of the streets give out a pleasant, melodious ring, and the omnibuses wear a festive aspect as they take up smart young people for the theatres or economical guests for dinner-parties. And now from the gates of our suburban station comes the man of business, rather pale and fagged, but reviving under the influences of the soft balmy air. And there is madam, who has come to meet her spouse, and the little girl in long stockings and short skirts who hops joyfully along linked to papa's little finger.

And now there is a sudden rush of carriages along the road, such prancing horses, such glittering harness, such serried lines of liveries. His Grace the Duke of Jerusalem has been giving a garden party—the last event of the season—at his old-fashioned palace by the river, and all the fine people who have been there are hurrying homewards to dress for dinners or entertainments elsewhere, and so to keep things stirring far into the pleasant summer's night. And alongside these, trudging steadily towards their courts and alleys, goes a long procession of women from the market-gardens, with heavy, dusty boots; old, many-coloured shawls wrapped about them; shapeless bonnets; and ragged old skirts.

The prancing horses and stately aristocratic equipages have eclipsed for a moment the less pretentious vehicles; but here come the little traps, with the clever little ponies, whereof ladies are mostly the charioteers, hurrying home from some pleasant little rendezvous among trees and greensward. And now with the sharp clatter of hoofs and clink of steel, a troop of horse ride by, their housings covered with country dust, the men tired and bronzed—Life Guards from some distant field of manoeuvres. And after these the advanced guard of a long column of pleasure vans, crowded with school children, shouting and singing and hanging over the sides of the vehicles, doing their level best to get their little limbs into trouble. Of all denominations and from every part of the town the terrible little urchins all unite in hymning the universal chorus, "Boom de ay!" Away they go, igniting coloured lights, which spread a crimson glare over the scene and add the perils of fire to the other perils of the road; surely there must be a whole array of cherubs

sitting up aloft to watch over these irrepressible little imps. But the shrill voices of the children are music itself to the roar of the returning banfeasters and the general tribe of merry-makers from suburban resorts. Hoarse voices roaring out of tune, cornets blaring half a bar ahead, accordions lagging in the rear, scrannel-pipes and jew's-harps all joining in the general din, while all the dogs of the neighbourhood howl and yelp an accompaniment.

But if the high-road is a little noisy, there is profound stillness in the half country lane, where gas lamps shine among the deep shadows of the trees and bring out the sheen of the golden apples so thickly clustered in the orchards. The gaslight, too, reveals the approach of a little troop of street boys returning from some successful raid upon the neighbouring gardens. Their garments are full of apples, which burst forth through unexpected rents. The astute little depredators have not only stolen the apples, but also a barrel to put them in; but at the sound of footsteps the whole rout disappears like so many uncanny little elves, and there only remain the barrel and a few scattered apples as evidences of their reality. And now we are upon the river, where scattered lights are shining, and where in the twilight rises the cry: "Last boat for London."

And a pleasant voyage it is by the last boat on this summer's night, the moon now rising over the dark shore, and now shining on the water and reflected in golden ripples. Factories and works are all dark and silent; the bridges, festooned with lamps, and the piers and their dim lights seem to float towards us and then glide silently away. Dazzling, after the dark wooded banks, are the lighted halls of Westminster and the myriad points of light that dance around; and quite dim by contrast is the Embankment, while the opposite shore seems wrapped in almost savage gloom. Grim, too, are the lights from London Bridge, and dark the shadows in the Pool beyond.

And here in half darkness the boats from down the river are discharging their freights of those who have tea'd and shrimped at Gravesend, or spent a happy day at Rosherville, or loitered under the trees in Greenwich Park. They have danced and sung to the music of the brass band; they have jovially pledged each other from flasks and case-bottles; and now, with tired children and babies swathed in shawls, with baskets and bags

of shrimps and other light baggage, they scramble up the gangway in family groups and are lost in the dark shadows of Thames Street.

It is pleasant, too, to be on the outer rim of London once more, and along the shaded lane where the old manor house, among its trees, and the pond with its silvery sheen, look quite romantic in the moonlight. And looking over a hedge, there is the glare of London in the sky, and from the vague gloom shine out myriads of twinkling lights. Now a fiery dragon sweeps across the space with a roar and shriek, with a tail of sulphurous steam, illumined by the deep glow of the engine fires; or more softly a fretwork of golden light winds sinuously past and is swallowed up among the dazzling lamps, with changing hues, of some suburban station. And again, out of the darkness, the night being clear and still, there appears a sparkle of coloured fires. It is the Crystal Palace that is letting off its fireworks, a dozen miles or so away as the crow flies—and what a flight for the crow, over what thousands of houses, what miles of streets glittering with lighted shops, with brilliant taverns, with broad, illuminated crossings; and what miles of other streets, darksome, gloomy, with crowded courts and alleys hardly reached by the soft influences of this summer night!

As we gaze over the hedge, as it might be from the hanging gardens of Babylon, with the proud city beneath, a policeman appears out of the gloom, suspecting tramps or wayside depredators. Reassured on this point, he pauses, not indisposed for talk. No, he has never noticed the "Palace" from here; has never looked for it, indeed; it is not on his beat. Ah, he has got a beat if you like—can get round it twice in the eight hours. Is pretty well tired at the end of his turn; but it will soon be over now, in half an hour he will meet the relief. And it's a healthy job after all; different from what it was down at King's Cross, where he could get round in ten minutes, but just like an oven; and the rows, and the screeching and fighting! Ah, he's twice the man he was, what with the air and the exercise. Yes, it is a fine night; but he doubts there will be a change; his boots tell him that—a pair of new boots that have let him have it hot this journey. And so with a cheery "good night" the policeman vanishes into the gloom.

Now a few carriages roll by with gleam-

ing lamps, and give us a glimpse of ladies in evening dress and powdered footmen; and there is the constant flitting past of coloured lights from the noiseless cycles that whirl past in the dark. Anon there is a murmur of voices and the sound of many footsteps, and a band of pilgrims make their appearance from the station below—pilgrims of both sexes, with a fair proportion of young men and maidens. The parson of St. Oswald's is at their head, and marshals them the way that they should go, and then drops back to talk to one and the other. There is a banner, too. "St. Oswald's Guild" shines in gold letters in the lamp-light.

"Hope you have had a pleasant day, Mrs. Brown."

"Oh, lovely!" cries Mrs. Brown; "only I don't think I shall ever want to go anywhere else again."

To the Isle of Wight and back in the day is a pretty large order even for a congregational picnic; but they have done it handsomely, it seems, and the young people are still chatting merrily, while a melancholy youth brings up the rear, tootling the while on a flute or fife. Is it anything processional? Alas, no! it is only "Boom de ay."

All this time there have been sparkles and gems of fire from the heights at Sydenham, and now the sky is lighted up for a moment as the final bouquet explodes, and darkness settles over the horizon.

The way is now past market-gardens and orchards, and trim homesteads, where, in the stable yards, are ranged great waggons piled high with all kinds of vegetables. Stables are lighted up, horses champ, and harness clatters; for the waggoner and his horses day is only just beginning.

Now we are in the great highway again, where a comparative calm has settled. The last tram is rumbling along half filled with sleepy passengers; only a solitary horn can be heard in the distance, and but one four-horse break is refreshing its crew at the "Halfway Tavern." But what is this vehicle approaching with speed, with four huge glaring lamps that lighten up the whole road, with its four galloping horses, with its coachman in scarlet and gold lace? Is it the ghost of the four-horse mail-coach, such as this old coaching road must have seen night after night flaring along in the darkness of night, with its news of peace or war, of riot, change of Government, or conspiracy? Room for the "Royal Mail,"

for such it still is, at first sight like some old "diligence," with all its top-hamper, but only the Royal Parcel Mail after all, without passengers, without letters, with no scarlet-coated guard, or echoing horn, or martial blunderbuss; the very ghost, indeed, of the old-time Royal Mail, but yet imposing in its way and interesting as a revival as it dashes along, charged with our haberdashery and knots of ribbon, our bibelots and keepsakes, and all the little unconsidered trifles that we send by Parcel Post.

And now the last train is in and the station lights are put out. The guard, with his bundle of flags and his lamp, is going home too. Mars is rising redly in the east, and Jupiter hangs like a lamp in the sky; the moon behind the poplars throws a silvery gleam through their dark masses; and still the glare of the sleepless city hangs in the horizon. Slow waggons go creaking past grinding heavily along, due at Covent Garden at three in the morning. They follow each other in long rows, the horses following the leader with unswerving fidelity, the waggoners motionless and half asleep on their perches. But a little dog is in full vigilance, and barks shrilly at those who have stopped to watch the procession from the kerb. There is something almost solemn about it: the waggons black and funereal in the shade, or touched with the moonbeams as they come into the open, the silence and sober pace, the quietude of the surroundings.

One thinks of the desert and the caravan, of spiced air, and brilliant Orient skies. But there is no need to go farther afield, for shy as it is in coming, when it once comes, there is nothing to rival the sweetness of a balmy summer's night—even about London.

NOT ABOVE DIAMONDS.

A COMPLETE STORY.

THE Reverend Edward Peele, curate of St. Mark's, Shelburn, hardly realised the modern ideal of a model clergyman. As most of our modern ideals are founded on nothing more material than a novelist's conception of man as he ought to be, it would have been strange if he had. Even detectives, amateur or professional, find it hard to live up to the standard set before them by writers of fiction. Nevertheless Mr. Peele did his work fairly well in the lower middle-class suburb of the great

port to which the necessity of earning his living had called him, and thanked fate daily that his lot was not cast in the parish of St. Paul, down by the docks.

About nine o'clock at night, if he happened to be at home in his lodgings, it was his custom to lay aside his clerical coat, put on his college blazer, and let the wayward thoughts of the natural man have free play till bed-time. He thought it rather hard lines if any one called on parish business at that hour, and had told Mrs. Lee, his landlady, to parley with any such inconsiderate persons at the outer gate, and, if possible, induce them to call again at a more convenient season. Consequently, one evening in the spring of the year 1877, he was annoyed when Mrs. Lee knocked at his door and said that a young woman wanted to see him.

"Can't she come to-morrow?" he asked testily. His modest stipend did not allow him to indulge in the luxury of a special room for pastoral interviews, and he was half-way through his first pipe, and had just opened a bottle of beer.

"No, sir; leastways she says not," replied the landlady, evidently doubtful of the caller's veracity.

"All right; then show her in. Do you know who she is?" asked the curate.

"No, sir, not by name; but I think it's a young person in the dressmaking at Webb's," replied Mrs. Lee, in a tone that implied her poor opinion of Mr. Webb's dressmakers as a body.

The curate's face brightened. His favourite Sunday-school teacher did, he knew, occupy the responsible position of "first hand" in the great drapery establishment of Webb and Company. He rose and went to the door himself, polite and apologetic.

"Oh! pray come in, Miss Jebson," he said, "I had no idea it was you. This is an unexpected pleasure. Won't you take a seat?" he continued, as his landlady closed the room door behind his visitor and retired to her kitchen in the basement sniffing superciliously.

Miss Jebson was a young woman apparently about five-and-twenty—the curate's own age—decidedly pretty in a somewhat pronounced style, and quite self-possessed.

"Really I don't know what you will think of me, Mr. Peele, calling at this hour," she said, as she took the proffered chair, "but I am kept so late at business just now, that——"

"Don't mention it, Miss Jebson," he interrupted. "As you see, I am more fortunate than you. For once in a way I finished my work unusually early and was—was really feeling quite lonely."

The gentleman smiled as he finished his sentence, the lady blushed slightly, and their eyes met. Then she coughed and looked down. It was a little—a very little—cough; but the curate said immediately:

"Oh, dear, I'm afraid the smoke is troublesome to you, Miss Jebson. Bad bachelor habits, you see."

"Not at all, Mr. Peele," she hastened to reply; "not at all, I assure you. It smells—well, home-like, you know;" and again their eyes met.

The eye has been called the rapier of flirtation, and it was evident that the curate and Miss Jebson were now enjoying not by any means their first bout with that fascinating weapon. Their conversation, too, was frisky, and did credit to their capacity for making the best of this rare opportunity of allowing natural frivolity to forget for a moment its artificial trammels. After flitting around various subjects it touched at last lightly upon the bottle of beer, and the curate was only prevented from opening one for his visitor by her frightened exclamation of:

"No, don't, Mr. Peele. She'll hear the cork pop."

This reference to Mrs. Lee made the curate, as it were, lower his point for a while, and with as near an approach to his clerical manner as could be expected under the circumstances, he asked:

"By-the-bye, Miss Jebson, what was it you wanted to see me about?"

"There, now," retorted she, still playfully, "you nearly made me forget all about it with your nonsense. I wanted to ask you about—about a sort of legacy."

"A legacy! A large one, I hope," said the curate suavely. "But you know, my dear Miss Jebson, I am not sufficiently blessed, or burdened, with this world's goods to be much of an authority about investments."

"It isn't exactly about investments I want to ask you," she replied, showing for the first time some slight confusion of manner. "It's not money; it's diamonds."

"But diamonds," objected the curate, "can be turned into money, you know."

"Yes," she assented; "that's just it. How am I to turn them into money? I

had an uncle who went out to the Cape many years ago, and he has just sent them to me by a sailor—a mate."

"Sent them to you by a sailor?" repeated the curate. "Was not that rather rash?"

"Well, I suppose it was," she agreed; "but it was very like poor uncle. Besides, the man who brought them came from our village; it wasn't like trusting a stranger, you know."

"Then your uncle isn't dead?" asked the curate.

"Oh! no. At least he wasn't when he sent them off," she replied; "but I don't know where he is except that it's somewhere in South Africa, and Jack Suggitt—that's the sailor—just handed me the packet and said: 'Here, Polly, your uncle Fred sent you these with his love,' and was off almost before I had time to thank him, as he sailed that tide for San Francisco. He said he had only been in port three days, and had had some trouble to find me."

"Dear me; what a very curious proceeding!" remarked the curate. "Didn't your uncle even send a letter with them?"

"No; nothing," she replied. "Just the diamonds; that was all."

"What a strange way of sending a present," he said; "especially as I suppose it was a valuable one."

"Well, yes; I suppose they are valuable. There are such a lot of them; look, Mr. Peele;" and she took from her pocket a small canvas bag, and poured its contents out on the table.

The curate was dazzled; not literally, because the stones were uncut, but metaphorically. He had expected to see half-a-dozen gems at the most, and there were about two hundred spread before him.

"My dear girl," he exclaimed, startled, "do for goodness' sake put them away before Mrs. Lee comes in. I had no idea you had so many. But how do you know they are diamonds?"

"Well, Suggitt said they were, and I showed my landlady's son, who works at a jeweller's, just one little one," she explained.

"Why, they must be worth thousands," he said. "I really don't know what to advise."

He was prevented from considering the matter further just then by Mrs. Lee, who knocked at the door, opened it, glanced with some asperity at Miss Jebson, begged

pardon, and remarked that, thinking the lady must have gone, she had come up to fasten the front door.

On this hint Miss Jebson rose, and the curate, who trembled at the thought of such wealth going unprotected, prepared to escort her home. Their way lay through quiet streets on the outskirts of the town, and as they went the spirit of flirtation resumed its sway. There are, as the novelists say, when they have enough to work on without padding the volume with another love scene, conversations which the imagination of the experienced reader is able to supply for itself. The imagination of the reader will therefore doubtless be equal to the task of picturing to itself how the influence of the diamonds gradually materialised the spirit of flirtation on this occasion, until it presented an appearance indistinguishable from that of serious love-making.

The serious love-making, moreover, did not end with the walk. Mr. Peele belonged by birth to much the same social stratum as Miss Jebson, and his University career had somehow failed to imbue him with either aristocratic prejudices or high aspirations. He had no means beyond his stipend, and confessed to himself in moments of candour, that he had neither virtues, talents, nor interest enough to expect high or speedy promotion. The pretty dressmaker and her diamonds might, he felt sure, be his for the trouble of asking, and ere long he put his confidence to the test.

The lady had no reason for saying no. As a clergyman's wife, she thought, she would have an assured and desirable position in society, and she liked well enough the clergyman who was willing to give her the chance of taking it. Whether he would have married her without the diamonds she did not ask herself—for, indeed, she knew that it would have been impossible for him to do so.

Neither of them had any relations to consult, so within a month of the sale of the stones—which the curate effected with the help of his banker for between twelve and thirteen thousand pounds—they were quietly married. Three months later the clerical journals notified the appointment of the Rev. Edward Peele, late curate at St. Mark's, Shelburn, to the so-called living of Petherby—one of those unfortunate places which are occasionally advertised as needing an earnest clergyman with enough private means to make him independent of any official income.

One evening towards the end of last June, the Vicar of Petherby sat in his garden arguing with his wife, or rather listening resignedly to what she had to say on the subject of the annual migration to the seaside.

The position of vicarress seemed to have suited Mrs. Peele. She had grown stout, but was still quite as good-looking as any woman of forty, the mother of three children, can expect to be. Her eyes were as bright as ever, though the glances thereof had lost all unseemly levity, and assumed the power that comes of much practice in the art of keeping farmers' wives in their proper places. She ruled her husband and the parish with an autocratic, but, on the whole, a beneficent sway.

The Rev. Edward Peele had distinctly degenerated since his Shelburn days. He too had grown stout, as lazy men in easy places are apt to do. His face was red, and as the face of one who lives almost too well. As his wife's lieutenant he administered the affairs of his parish in a way that, if it did not call forth the admiration of his Bishop, yet escaped his admonition as perhaps the best that could be expected from a man a little below the average for next to nothing a year.

His only remaining taste of an elevating character was a fondness for cricket. The village club he managed himself, and its affairs consequently showed more tendency to get into a tangle than is common even in village cricket-clubs. With the hope of seeing his favourite game played in perfection once again, he had tried to persuade his wife to take her summer change at Skelmersham, an inland watering-place famed for its cricket fortnight.

It was not to be, however. Parsons of high degree were common at Skelmersham, and Mrs. Peele there felt herself nobody. Any one above the rank of a dissenting minister counted for somebody at Barmby, a fifth-rate seaside place, and so to Barmby she had determined to go as usual.

After condescending to set forth more in detail than usual her reasons for this step, she remarked by way of peroration:

"Then that settles it, Edward. If you go on Monday to look for rooms, you ought to get back by Wednesday night, and we can all leave here early Thursday morning."

Next Monday evening the Vicar accordingly found himself in the melancholy coffee-room of the only hotel at Barmby, gazing into the empty fireplace, which was

not yet decorated for the season, smoking and thinking—if the word can be applied to the vague musings of a man who, for fifteen years, has lived a life as idle and self-indulgent as is compatible with sustaining without ill-repute the character of vicar of a small country parish.

He had just come to the comfortable but probably false conclusion that but for his wife and her diamonds he might have been a better, or at least a more eminent man, when the door opened sharply, and a second guest entered the room. The Vicar looked up, and the new-comer greeted him with :

"Hullo! All alone here, and down in the dumps too! Better join me in a drink, sir, just to lift you out of them a bit!"

The Vicar was not accustomed to move in that section of society in which the offer of a drink from a total stranger is not uncommon, but he was still less accustomed to refuse at a moment's notice to do anything he was told. Moreover, he had read that American desperadoes held the refusal of such an offer a sufficient excuse for the use of their favourite weapon, and the man before him was not unlike his mental picture of an American desperado, so he murmured feebly :

"Well, thank you; I was, indeed, thinking of ringing for the waiter when you came in. Really, I think nothing makes one so thirsty as travelling."

"Ring away, then," responded the stranger. "What's it to be, though? Whisky? Right. Watter, two big whiskies and soda. Soda's a sort of antidote to the poison they call whisky in this kind of shanty, don't you think?"

"But, indeed," ventured the Vicar, as his new acquaintance paused for breath, "the whisky they used to keep here was rather good."

"Been here before, have you, then, Mr. —," rejoined the other, and paused again, as if expecting to be supplied with the name.

"Peele is my name," replied the Vicar, who was affable, and had not enough dignity to be offended at the man's brusque manner. "Might I ask—?"

But he got no further. With an oath the stranger jumped up from the table on which he had taken his seat, and roared out :

"What? By the living jingo, Pell, did you say?"

"No," replied the clergyman timidly. "Peele—P, double e, l, e."

The other said nothing for a moment, but eyed the trembling Vicar suspiciously.

"Were you ever in a place, crib, berth, or whatever you preachers call it, at Shelburn?" he asked at last.

Intuitively the Vicar knew that a truthful answer to this question would entail unpleasant consequences, and, not being of the stuff of which martyrs are made, he replied unblushingly :

"No, sir; never in my life."

"Ah, well," said the stranger, who had now calmed down considerably, "then you can't be the man."

"What man do you mean?" asked the Vicar.

The other laughed.

"Oh! a chap in your line of life who married an old friend of mine years ago," he said lightly. "I've often thought I'd like to meet him, and find out what sort of a yarn Polly spun him about my diamonds, and if she told him she had 'em, before or after they were spliced."

He delivered himself of the latter part of this remark, more as if he were thinking aloud than addressing his companion. Then he relapsed into a moody silence; fixed himself more firmly on the table; and sat swinging his legs, with an empty pipe between his teeth, absorbed no doubt in memories of the past.

The Vicar, watching him cautiously out of the corner of his eye, was able to take in the details of his appearance better than he had hitherto done. He seemed to be a reckless, good-humoured sort of fellow, with something of the sailor about him, and a good deal of the free-living blackguard. To drink he was evidently no stranger, and yet his clothes were good enough to make it clear that he was in no immediate want of ready money. The Vicar had just come to the conclusion that the man was probably a little mad, and might on occasion be not a little dangerous, when he spoke again.

"I believe there's something they call a billiard-table in this hole," he said. "Do you play, governor?"

As Mr. Peele had not touched a cue since his undergraduate days, his answer of: "A little, but I am rather short of practice," was more literally true than it usually is when used by amateurs, as the proper form of reply to a stranger proposing a game.

Mr. Peele's knowledge of billiards was, as a matter of fact, very elementary indeed, but he would have played quoits—of which

he knew absolutely nothing—for a pound a side, rather than lose the chance of getting a little further information about Polly and the diamonds.

His desire for knowledge was soon gratified. The stranger tired of an opponent who had to be reminded continually, when in hand, that a ball in baulk was unplayable, and said sarcastically:

"I don't think, friend, you were quite Roberts at six stone when you were turned out of training. Suppose we sit down and have another drink?"

The Vicar accepted this proposal willingly, though he mildly insisted on paying for the drink. The stranger after some persuasion allowed him to do so, declaring at the same time his own ability and readiness to buy up the cellar of the inn if he chanced to find companions to his liking, ready to do their share in swallowing its contents.

"Yet, you know, parson," he went on, "I like you the better for standing your turn. Gents in your line are, most of 'em, all take and no give. I've often thought it must rile chaplains in Portland and places, not being able to pass round the plate to the convicts. But not one of you, I'll lay, ever had such a haul at one cast as that chap Pell."

"Oh! you mean the man that married your friend with the diamonds," said the Vicar, as unconcerned as he could. "I should like to hear the story."

"Well," said the other, graciously, "you seem a good sort, and you shall. In those days, fifteen years ago or so, I had a lovely little bag of shiners, uncut. Enough to set a man up for life in a modest way, if he could sell 'em honest and keep clear of those foreign thieves in Amsterdam. And I gave them all to this girl, that I'd known from a child, to keep for me."

"But why did you do that?" interrupted the clergyman. "Surely it was rash. Why did you not dispose of them yourself or deposit them with a banker?"

"Why didn't I——" began the other, but checked himself and surveyed his questioner with a somewhat suspicious and decidedly hazy eye. "Oh! You want to know too much, you do. Perhaps the market was falling just then, or perhaps I had a pressing appointment—never you mind. Anyhow, I left 'em with Polly Jebson on a sort of time-bargain. If I turned up within ten years we were to

set up housekeeping on 'em, and if I didn't, well, they were hers anyway. I got off light—I mean returned before the time was up a good three years—and blessed if I didn't find she'd married a parson within twelve months of the time I went away. Came into money, the folks said, and left her situation to marry this chap called Pell."

"Dear me!" remarked the Vicar, doing his best to speak sympathetically, yet calmly. "What a base betrayal of trust! And did you take no steps to trace her and your property?"

"Not me," replied the other in a scornful tone. "For one thing I'd come into a nice bit of money in the interval; more than as much as did for me, being a man of simple tastes; and for another, as I told you, it didn't exactly suit my book to let all the world know I had the stones. Not that I hadn't come by them honestly enough—but there; all that don't matter anyway."

"Then you really don't know what became of her or them?" asked the Vicar.

"Well, no; not exactly," said his companion, "and I don't want. I'm not a spiteful chap, and it would do me no good to stir up old mud; but if I met that chap, Pell, blessed if I don't think I'd ask him whether his wife ever mentioned Jack Suggitt. As for Polly, I dare say I was well out of her way at the price. She'll have run to fat and temper, and perhaps a large family, as like as not. Her mother did. But I'm precious dry; let's have one more drink before turning in."

The Vicar sighed, but did not refuse. He felt that Mr. Suggitt's mood was not to be depended on, and that he was in a ticklish position. The drinks came and were consumed in silence. Then, to the Vicar's great relief, the other said politely:

"Well, good night, governor. Early to bed's my motto when there isn't anything to sit up for. Glad to have met you. See you again to-morrow, eh? I'm here for a week or two myself under doctor's orders."

He retired without waiting for a reply, and the Vicar, after a judicious interval, followed his example, sorely troubled in mind. He slept but little that night, and fled by the first train in the morning.

His wife, after greeting him with the expression of her disbelief in his ability to thoroughly inspect all the suitable apartments and choose the very best in less time than she had allowed him, noticed his pale and troubled look and exclaimed:

"Why, Edward, whatever is the matter with you? You look as if you had seen a ghost!"

"Perhaps I have, my dear," he replied feebly. "The ghost of the sailor who gave you your diamonds."

"Don't try to be funny, Edward, it doesn't suit you," retorted his wife, with all her usual severity and self-confidence. "What do you mean?"

Slowly he told his story, and slowly, but with amazement, did he note that, though the gloom gathered on his wife's brow, she showed no sign of fear or shame. When he had finished the storm broke.

"And you dare to tell me you believed this tale, Edward Peele?" she began. "I send you to seek lodgings, and you spend the time you ought to be devoting to the future comfort of your wife and family in consorting with drunken sailors and listening to scandal against me. What would you have been without me, I'd like to know? A starving curate in debt to your very landlady. A man would have knocked the fellow down first and given him in charge for slander afterwards."

"But, my dear," pleaded the miserable Vicar, "I never said I did believe his story." His conscience smote him, however, for it had never entered his head to doubt it.

His wife deigned no immediate reply. She treated him with open scorn for a fortnight, but did after all desert Barmby for Skelmersham for fear, as she said, that her husband should further disgrace himself in low company. This apparent consciousness of rectitude greatly relieved Mr. Peele's mind. It was quite possible, after all, that the man Suggitt had persuaded himself that the diamonds entrusted to him had been his own. Doctors differ as to whether the wish to believe makes belief harder or easier. The Vicar certainly wished to believe his wife's version of the affair, but could not free his mind from the idea that it was his duty to probe it to the bottom. That, with the fear of his wife before his eyes, he would ever have done that duty is not probable; but he was spared from the trial of making the attempt. Three weeks after his visit to Barmby he saw a report of an inquest on a man who had killed himself there while under the influence of drink, and a few enquiries satisfied him that the subject of that inquest was the eccentric stranger whose story had so troubled him.

Still, he will never read of the virtuous

woman who was above rubies without thinking of the cynic's comment upon her, unless he receives stronger proof than he ever expects to get of the actual existence of that generous giver—his wife's uncle at the Cape.

THE LATE MRS. VERNON.

By A. MOBERLY.

Author of "Lady Valeria," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XI.

SUNDAY morning came with a bright sun and the first touch of frost in the air. The street was full of floating, glorified vapour; the bricks of the opposite chimney-stacks were outlined in faint white rime, which vanished as I looked; the footsteps of the early churchgoers rang sharply on the pavement. The season had changed and so had I. I look back with amazement now on the mood in which I began that day. It was the faint exhilarating sting in the air, or the new tonic Dr. Millar was trying, or some occult inspiration of the demon, or simply the rush of returning health and strength, that lifted me up out of my usual sober self. Even the sight of my unsent letter failed to depress me. As to the coming interview with my mysterious correspondent, it seemed but a pleasant excitement. I was gloriously confident of being able to hold my own against all comers. I caught myself singing—and a secular song too—as I brushed my hair. Even that had taken a rebellious fit on its own account and curled in little wilful rings, like Muriel's, round my fingers instead of lying in sleek, decorous twists. It was long enough, I thought, with dexterous adjustment, to conceal the scar and enable me to dispense with the cap. I piled it up in a mass of soft little coils, recklessly appropriating some sparkling jet pins that lay in the tray of Mrs. Vernon's box, and tossed the cap aside. It belonged to the miserable invalid of yesterday, on whom I looked back with a gentle disdain. As to the meek drudge of bygone days, what had I in common with her? I asked myself in utter disdain.

Then a further temptation assailed me. I looked with loathing on the invalid toilettes I had been wearing. Who can show force of character in a tea-gown? Kitty had often dangled a certain costume enticingly before me, a quiet cloth walking dress by profession, but so edged and

trimmed with costly fur, and lined with satin, as to be utterly unsuitable—or I thought so then. Now I boldly donned it, feeling a moral support in the well-cut draping of the skirt and set of the collar. Dress may be the outcome of a woman's character, but it certainly has a reflex action. My fur slippers were impossible with the short skirt. A pair of many-buttoned Parisian boots followed by natural sequence. The smart hat and muff to match were packed with the dress; I took them out and began to wish for an excuse to wear them.

"Oh, you jackdaw!" I exclaimed to my reflection, but I smoothed out my peacock plumage complacently nevertheless.

Mrs. Brent was politely enthusiastic about my improved personal appearance when I came down to breakfast. When she had finished her compliments, I consulted her conscientiously on the possibility of getting a messenger to deliver Colonel Fortescue's letter. She looked doubtful.

"You see, ma'am, I've let the girl go to church this morning, and I can't leave the house myself. Will it do later?"

"It must—or you may post it."

Now the church bells clashed out, in-harmonious but inspiring, and two streams of smart worshippers began to meet and pass in the street below. I composed myself sedately with my Bible and Prayer-book and began to look out the Psalms and Lessons for the day; but the clang of the bells and the passing footsteps filled me with restlessness, and after a sharp struggle for attention I gave up and let the demon have his way, and took to pacing the room excitedly, wishing for the bells to stop and the hour of the interview to come. Had I been a Scotch-woman I should have known what ailed me—I was fey.

The bells dropped into silence almost simultaneously and the streets as suddenly emptied. The last stragglers had disappeared before I saw a cab giving signs of stopping at the door. It drew up and a tall woman in black got out.

Mrs. Brent's face expressed a good many things, mostly disparaging, as she announced "Miss Pexton," and gave a last scrutinising glance at the woman who tramped heavily in and nodded unceremoniously to me with a gruff "Good day."

She dropped herself into a chair and

took a good look about her first thing, then when Mrs. Brent had retired she sprang to her feet—softly enough this time—and jerked the door suddenly open. "That woman looks an old meddler." I'll make the keyhole safe at any rate," she said, reclosing the door and turning the key.

"Unlock that door directly!" I commanded in my old school-room tone of authority, "if you wish me to listen to you for a moment."

She stared and frowned.

"Why, what harm? I don't want any interruptions. You mightn't like to have your friends coming poking their noses in while we are about our business, I should think."

"I don't object to any one finding you here, whatever you may do," I declared. "Nobody is likely to come, unless you persist in keeping that door fast," and I laid my hand determinedly on the bell-pull.

"Oh, just as you please," and she turned the key sulkily, and came back to her seat. She was a big, raw-boned woman with the air of a hard worker. Her manner was not intended to be insolent, I thought, only defiant and on her guard. Her eyes had a cute, greedy look that reminded me at once of Mrs. Tarrant and made me feel at home with her.

"Now your business at once, please," I demanded.

"Well, I'm Martha Pexton, as you know, and my father's name's Jacob Pexton, and both of those names is respectable enough but not likely to be known by you. Two years ago—just as we'd got the boys off our hands and thought there was going to be a bit of peace and quiet in the house—didn't he, old fool! go and marry again—a fine lady this time, who thought she'd got a comfortable home, with me for general servant—like enough! Her name you know well enough, Mrs. Vernon, or did some ten years ago. Fanny Burridge."

She brought the name out with a jerk, and a thump of her umbrella like a note of exclamation, keeping her eyes screwed like gimlets into my face. I waited patiently.

"Well, you are a close one!" I heard her mutter. "Fanny Burridge, the missing witness. There were questions enough asked about her once upon a time. You were supposed to be keeping her and yourself out of sight for good reasons, Mrs. Vernon."

Keeping quiet seemed to irritate and confuse her, so I kept quiet.

"Do you mean to pretend you don't know anything about her?" she asked, her colour rising, and her coarse lips working as if in readiness for an outburst.

"I saw the name in an old newspaper a short time ago, but you are making a great mistake if you suppose that I have ever known the person or had anything to do with her."

"Ho! So that is all you have to say, is it?" and Miss Pexton rose irate from her chair. "And I'm under a mistake in coming here, am I? Perhaps I'm also mistaken in supposing what I've got here may interest you." She tapped the front of her dress, where the corner of a long folded paper stuck out. "Perhaps I'm mistaken altogether, and I have not the honour of addressing Mrs. Thomas St. Clair Vernon after all!"

"Deny it if you can," her sharp eyes seemed to say. It was the first time the question had been put to me, and my answer was ready.

"That you most certainly are. I am not Mrs. Vernon, though you and others persist in mistaking me for her. I am interested in what you have there; but I warn you that you are dealing with me at your own risk."

Her wrath and bewilderment died away into simple contemptuous incredulity. It was evidently too clumsy a falsehood to take her in for a moment.

"I understand. You are deeper than I thought. Oh, no; you are not Mrs. Vernon, and you and Colonel Fortescue are not as thick as thieves. Perhaps you don't even know Miss Muriel by sight? It's all a series of accidents, ain't it?"

I must have looked sufficiently embarrassed to satisfy her, for she sat down again.

"Now we've settled that, let's get on. Mrs. Fanny Burridge Pexton, if you please, didn't find things quite as she expected after a bit. We were not the genteel society she had been used to, and she grew low, and dissatisfied, and used to cry by the hour, and talk of the happy days at Llantwyth Castle, and what a lot you—oh, of course I mean Mrs. Vernon—used to make of her. She took up with the Salvation Army, and that did her some good; but she was all wrong. First it was her soul, and then her back, and then her head went wrong, and now she's dying. Did you say 'Pore thing'? Ah, if you'd to nurse her and put up with her whims and fancies, you'd know who was

the pore thing, I fancy. Then one of the Salvation Army got at her, and it was nothing but awakening and conversions from morning to night. The way she'd go on, beating her breast and calling herself names till my temper gave way! I up and says to her at last, 'Now, look here; you've been and called yourself a gully wretch till I believe every word of it. For goodness' sake tell us what you've done, and we'll send for the police and get it over.' Well, she would and she wouldn't. Then one night home came father with a newspaper he'd bought, and as there was a bad accident in it he read it aloud to amuse her. When she heard your name she gave a screech, and one of her fits came on. A nice night I had, and nothing would serve her but I must go off first thing next morning to St. Jude's Hospital, where the paper said you'd been took, and make enquiries. Just as I got there up came a gentleman, who asked the porter to take his card to the matron. I got a good look at him, and when the porter came back he told me his name. Ah, you know. Colonel Fortescue it was. I heard a lot from that porter, and I got to see the matron too. You were still unconscious—couldn't see anybody. What did I want with you? I had my story ready. I was expecting my aunt from Ireland, and thought you might be her. I saw her look and laugh to herself at my ignorance, and she explained as how you had come from Folkestone and your luggage was marked from Paris. 'Was your name Anne Jane?' 'No, it wasn't; your things had an L embroidered on them'; and so on till I'd got all there was to know. Dear, dear, how that stepmother of mine went on! I wasn't to go near the hospital again. She'd been frightened by Colonel Fortescue sending the detectives after her once; she was afraid he could do something to her. Now she thought if she and Mrs. Vernon were both dead no harm could come of her telling all she had to tell, and it might be of use to Miss Muriel. I thought, supposing you got well, why, it might be of some use to me. I'm not good at writing, and her back was too bad to sit up long enough to put down all she had to say, so I got a young man as does shorthand to take down what she said, and here it is, all plain written out, and regularly signed and witnessed; and the question is, what will you give for it?"

She brought out a bulky blue envelope from the folds of her dress with dramatic

effect as she concluded, and slapping it down on the table, laid her big, clenched fist on it, her other hand grasping her umbrella as if in readiness to ward off any attack from me.

"I cannot answer that till I know what it is worth. What good do you suppose it can do me?" I answered her, trying not to look eager. "Am I to read it?"

"I suppose so." She spoke grudgingly. Then her eyes twinkled with a sudden idea. "But I must see the colour of your money first. You can't do any good without this paper, and you can't go and get another out of Mrs. Pexton. She's sinking fast, and, besides, you don't know where to find her; so I'm not afraid of letting you see it. But look here, no tricks. I'll let you have it sheet by sheet, and if you try to keep one of them all the rest go into the fire."

"My good woman, why should I want to keep one of them? Just ask yourself the question. If I look at it at all, it is only in the hope of finding something there which may benefit Miss Muriel Vernon. For myself, I have absolutely no interest whatever in it from beginning to end."

"You won't admit anything! Oh, you're a deep one!" she repeated rather admiringly.

"If you persist in being insolent I shall ring and have you shown out, and put the case into Colonel Fortescue's hands."

She edged her chair round to mine, drew one sheet from the envelope, and pocketed the rest, all in a subdued sort of way.

"I'll hold one corner and you the other. It begins there. You'd better look it over—you really had—for Miss Muriel's sake."

CHAPTER XII.

"THE confession of Fanny Pexton, formerly Burridge," it began. "My name is a celebrated one. I am the missing witness in the great divorce case of Vernon versus Vernon that was asked about in every newspaper in the country. I take no worldly pride in that now."

"There you see," broke in my visitor, "we had to put down page after page of rubbish about her cleaned heart and changed soul before we could get her to go on at all. You'll find a line drawn under it all. She thinks it is to make you notice it, but it's just so as you can skip if you choose, and you will if you want to get done to-day."

"I was engaged first as under-nurse at Llantwyth Castle, then when Mr. Vernon sent nurse about her business, and a good job too, I was let stay on as nurse. Miss Muriel was a dear little thing, just five years old, and took to me amazingly. Poor little creature, nobody else cared much about her, except her ma by fits and starts. The next to leave was Josephine, 'Mamselle Josephine' as she wanted to be called, though she was only half a Frenchwoman. She got the sack for giving Mr. Vernon a bit of her mind one day, and my lady was in fits about her going—just the very morning of a county ball. I heard Mr. Vernon ask 'what the deuce she wanted with another woman when there was that great hulking girl doing nothing all day long but play with the baby in the nursery?' I didn't hulk that I am aware of, and I wasn't hired as lady's-maid, and never saw the wages of one all the time I was with my lady, which must be my excuse for much that happened later when, being weak, I was led astray."

"There she goes again. Skip the rest of that page."

"That is how I became confidential maid to the unfortunate lady, who may be glad to know that I forgive and pity her."

"Skip again, ma'am, please," and the black cotton finger-tip indicated a lower line.

"I did my best that first evening, though what with her being in a way about Josephine's going, and him standing leaning against the dressing-table watching me with his ugly dark looks, my hands shook so that not a hairpin would stick in right, and I laced her bodice all crooked, and the clumsier I was the better he seemed pleased. He said something about an American lady, Mrs. Vanderstegen, now and then that put her out horribly—told her nobody would look at her or anything else while Mrs. Van and her diamonds were in the room. That set her off crying and asking where her diamonds had gone? Then he left us, and I went to ask the gardener for the yellow azaleas he had been keeping for her. Every one had been cut, by Mr. Vernon's orders, for a bouquet for Mrs. Vanderstegen. I thought she was going into hysterics when I told her. Her dress was plain enough, and she had been counting on Josephine trimming it with sprays of the natural flowers. She couldn't possibly go—Mr. Vernon shouldn't make her! Then came a knock at the door and a great

box was brought in. When we opened it, wasn't it full of the loveliest pale yellow roses—a sort the gardener said that was worth a guinea apiece just then, all ready made up into trails for the skirt and trimming for the bodice and sleeves, and a fan of them, and a spray for the hair—dear, dear, it was a pleasure to fasten them on. And she picked up just as pleased as a child, and did her hair herself most beautiful, and when I had tied one string of pearls round her lovely white throat I thought that no one could come near her, certainly not that vulgar little Yankee. Then she read a note that was with the fan, and laughed still more. I looked over into the hall where all the party from the house were waiting for the carriages, and saw Mr. Vernon come forward and say something civil, and wrap her up in her cloak as polite as you please—that was always his way before company; then I went back and read the note—what harm? It was signed 'F. Espinal,' and I knew that was the name of the handsome young fellow staying at the Moat who was so often over here. It was only some stuff about a dance she had promised him. That grown people should give way to such folly! It only shows how Satan——” Here the black underlining recommenced.

“She came home in fine spirits, telling me all the nonsensical compliments Mr. Espinal and other gentlemen had paid her, and making fun of Mrs. Vanderstegen—‘scraggy little thing, all eyes and diamonds,’ so she said, looking at her own white velvet shoulders in the glass, and then we heard Mr. Vernon’s step on the stairs, and she shivered and grew quiet. He came in looking like thunder, and ordered me away like a dog. I went to bed, and was just asleep when I heard some one at the door. It was my lady, crying and shaking, and pale as death. ‘May I sleep in your bed?’ she asked, and I cuddled her up and got her warm till she went to sleep sobbing. Mr. Vernon came to the door in the morning and ordered her back to her room, telling me to hold my tongue about my lady’s freaks, or it would be the worse for me.

“But they talked in the servants’ hall all the same—they know everything there. And they talked more when in the afternoon she came down and ordered her ponies round to drive to the Moat. Some of them remembered the last row, when she was picked up at the foot of the terrace steps with the bruise on her fore-

head. McCraw, the gardener, carried her in, and though he never would say what he saw or heard while he was trimming the rhododendrons under the terrace, yet it was known that McCraw had his wages raised, and got them paid, too, which was more than any of us could say.

“Mr. Espinal rode home beside Mrs. Vernon’s carriage that evening, and came in with her. I took up afternoon tea to them in her own sitting-room, and saw that she had been crying, and he was in a towering passion about something. I saw something else too—Mr. Vernon’s face between two flower-pots in the conservatory, spying on them like a cat; but he took precious good care to be not at home when Mr. Espinal asked for him, and couldn’t be found anywhere, and Mr. Espinal went away slashing his boot with his horse-whip, and using awful language.

“Miss Honor Vernon managed the house, and kept things as straight as she could—nasty, mean, spying old maid, always ferreting about and asking questions. She didn’t trouble my nursery much, that was one good thing. I think she hated the very sight of that poor child for her ma’s sake. Mr. Vernon was afraid of her. I think he owed her money, as he did to everybody who would lend it him. The fortunes that man had got through! He was in debt to Mr. Espinal, they said—more than he could ever pay—and that’s why he hated him so. I don’t think it was jealousy, not a bit. He’d have been only too glad for his wife to run away with anybody and leave him free to marry that American, who was quite ready to have him, they said. Mrs. Vernon was a silly, worldly young creature, given up to dress and other vanities, but nothing worse could be said of her, and here I say it most solemnly, from first to last as innocent as a baby.

“She had everything against her. Mr. Vernon’s plan, as I see it now, was just to frighten her into running away from him. He was as savage as he dared to be on the quiet, while before people he was all honey and pretty speeches. She didn’t understand what he meant one bit, and used to be crying one minute, and the next quite pleased and flattered because he was nice to her. As to Mr. Espinal, he was red-hot in love with her. He was a dark, foreign-looking young fellow—brought up, so they said, amongst Indians, leastways, blacks of some kind, which accounted for his arbitrary ways. Josephine thought he was

much too free with her mistress, and gave him the rough side of her tongue more than once. I believe it was his doing that she was sent off. He had quantities of money, and used to fling it about right and left. Many's the sovereign I've had from him, I humbly confess." Underscoring repeated.

"The hunt ball was to come off in about a fortnight. There was some nonsensical little secret going on between my lady and Mr. Espinal about it, and I had to fetch and carry notes between them half-a-dozen times a day. Of course I looked at them when I got a chance, but it was no good, they had taken to writing in French, which looked bad.

"There had been a fine scene in my lady's room one day. Her dressmaker had written refusing to take her orders for a new dress till the bill was settled. Mr. Vernon had told her to make a gown herself, or stay at home. Then she went off into hysterics, and he had slammed the door. I wished I could help her, and turned out all her dresses, but none of them would do, she declared. It was the very smartest ball of the year, and everybody would be there. She'd rather stop at home than go shabby. Then she cried, and wished for Josephine. Josephine would have thought of something. She hadn't a friend left when Josephine was sent away. I wished she were back again with all my heart. Oddly enough, I got a letter from her that very day. She was in London, but was going over to Guernsey to her aunt's wedding in a short time. She was a Guernsey woman herself, and used to talk about her rich relations there. This aunt was going to be married to a man who had a sort of boarding-house in the south of France, and they wanted Josephine to join them, as she spoke English so well, and knew the ways of English invalids who came there. 'Villa Napoleon, San Pino,' was the address she gave me. Josephine wanted first to try and get some of the wages owing to her out of Mr. Vernon, and said she would see a lawyer about it.

"I sat down and wrote to her there and then, and told her the whole story, for I was beginning to get uncomfortable, in spite of Mr. Espinal's sovereigns, and I knew Josephine was sharp, and could manage my lady as no one else could.

"Mrs. Vernon suddenly gave up fretting about her dress, and was happy, and quite contented, and light-hearted again. Mr.

Vernon was decently civil to her, even when they were alone, and I began to think I had made a fuss about nothing, if it hadn't been for these notes perpetually coming and going.

"I asked her about her dress once or twice; but she said it would be all right. And sure enough on the afternoon of the day of the ball one of Madame Amelie's great dress-boxes arrived from the station. When we unpacked it she shrieked with delight. Such brocade, and lace, and embroidery! Everything complete—fan, gloves, shoes and stockings. Directly after a box of flowers, that just matched it, came over from the Moat. I have long done with such miserable vanities." Vigorous underscoring as before.

"I went up early to help my mistress to dress, but when I knocked at her door I heard voices raging inside—first an angry growling, and then a shriek of such agony, that I ran away and called Miss Honor Vernon to come for mercy's sake! She banged the door open without ceremony, and there stood my mistress wringing her hands, the beautiful dress on the floor, all crumpled and soiled, and Mr. Vernon trampling upon it.

"'Come in!' he shouted. 'Do you see this, Honor? This!' and he stamped again on the satin and lace. 'That man—Espinal—has the assurance to send my wife this!' He was in a foaming rage, but it sounded as if it were not quite genuine, too. 'I am to let another man pay her bills, forsooth! I may be poor, but I have enough honour left not to endure such insult!'

"'My gown! My lovely gown!' Mrs. Vernon cried. 'You wicked wretch! you hateful, hateful creature! Ah!'

"She gave another shriek, and went off into violent hysterics, for he took the dress up in his arms and crushed it down on the fire. It wouldn't burn, so he threw it on the floor again, all crushed and blackened. Then he snapped the fan in two, and flung the flowers into a corner, swearing awfully.

"Miss Vernon only said 'Humph!' and looked spiteful. Then she ordered me downstairs. Half an hour after, the carriage drove off to the ball with Mr. Vernon alone in it. Miss Honor ordered some gruel, and went to bed, and I ventured up to see my lady. She had cried herself sick and limp. She told me to fetch her trunks and begin to pack, for she meant to go away directly. She could

stay no longer, but would run away and die. Mr. Espinal would help her to escape. I must take a note to him. I refused at first, but when she offered me her last winter's sealskin I gave way.

"The ball was given in the Shire Hall, and I couldn't think how to get in; but luckily Mr. Espinal, who was one of the committee, was in the hall giving some orders about the refreshments, and he brought me into the cloak-room, which was empty, and heard what I had to tell. He thought a bit, and then told me to order a carriage at the 'Vernon Arms,' to be at the gate on the London Road by a quarter to twelve, in time to catch the midnight express to London at the junction. He would meet us at the station. He wrote a few lines on the back of his programme and hurried me off. When I got back to the Castle I found a fly waiting at the servants' entrance, and was told as soon as I got in that Mademoiselle Josephine had come and was with my lady. Sure enough, there she was helping Mrs. Vernon to dress as if she had never left. She had finished all the packing, too. I began to tell about Mr. Espinal, but she cut me short and actually threw his note into the fire without giving it to Mrs. Vernon. Then she sent me down to bring up some supper, hot soup, wine and sandwiches. She has a way with her, has Josephine! Then when she had got what she wanted she sent me to see after Miss Muriel, who had been roused up and was crying. I got her to sleep at last, but when I came back to my mistress's room they were both gone—gone away in Josephine's fly, the footman who carried down the luggage said, quite openly and boldly. I could have sat down and cried, I was that put out. To go away, no one knew where, after me serving her so faithful; and Josephine had taken care to pack up that sealskin, you may be sure! Mr. Espinal had said something about a ten pound note if I managed all well, too; now I shouldn't see that, I supposed, nor my wages either. I was just mad; besides I was afraid of what Mr. Vernon might do. I went back to tidy the room and I saw,

left on the dressing-table behind the pin-cushion, my lady's gold watch and chain, and I thought of the wages that never would be paid me, and I was tempted and fell. Likewise also a pair of silk stockings, and an umbrella with a gold and coral handle, and a velvet-bound Prayer-book, some bangles, a few bits of underlinen, and an ivory-backed hair-brush, with a turquoise monogram, do I humbly confess to. When I had got them all together I thought I had better get away too before Mr. Vernon came home. So I packed as fast as I could and managed to carry my box as far as the London Road gate, and when the carriage came up I just drove off to the station without taking leave of anybody. I got out at the third-class entrance and kept out of sight amongst the people who were waiting. As the train went off I saw Mr. Espinal on the platform, looking about with a face of such rage and disappointment as I never did see on mortal man. I was not surprised to hear of his putting an end to himself, poor misguided creature.

"I went home to my own people, but they didn't behave well to me—greedy, grasping things.

"Then the divorce case came on, and I was desperately frightened lest Mrs. Vernon should come back to England, and Josephine, just for spite, should bring me into trouble about the bits of things I had taken. So I wrote letters that I thought would keep Mrs. Vernon away, until one day I found that the police were after me—that was Colonel Fortescue's doing, I'm told—and I was so scared that I took service at once with some people going to South America. I couldn't be particular as I had no character to give, and a terrible lot I got amongst. They treated me worse than any black slave, and it was years before I had a chance of coming home again. Now that my troubles are nearly over—"

Here the underscoring recommenced and extended down to the bottom of the page. Miss Pexton twitched the sheet from between my fingers. It was the last one.

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MISS LATIMER OF BRYANS.

By ELEANOR C. PRICE.

Author of "Alexia," "Red Towers," "The Little One," etc.

CHAPTER XVI. THE JOURNEY.

"I CANNOT attack him now—here—on this platform—it is morally impossible," thought the Rector, as he walked with Geoffrey Thorne towards the booking-office. "What am I to do? He will take his ticket and be off in half an hour. I, most foolish and futile—shall have done nothing whatever. He—and the revolver! He is an amazing young man, to be so natural with it all. Very quiet, though, and still waters run deep. What am I to say; what am I to do?"

In answer to these questions an idea leaped ready made into the Rector's brain. At first he was startled.

"Is thy servant a dog?" flashed also into his mind. But after all, the idea was innocent and partly true. A sudden plan and a sudden decision were not sins, and need not be confessed to his fellow-man. His bag and his pocket-book were provided for such an emergency. The suggestion which had at first seemed so clever that it must be diabolic began very soon to take rank as an angel's whisper. At the door of the booking-office Mr. Cantillon said to Geoffrey:

"Do I understand that you are on your way to Paris?"

"Yes," said the young man gravely, looking at the floor. "To Paris and to Switzerland. I get a train on to Berne early to-morrow. Can I do anything for you—take your ticket anywhere?"

"To Paris, if you please," said Mr.

Cantillon. "Stop a moment, though. You must go? You are bent on going?"

Geoffrey glanced at him, and flushed up to his hair under the look of those clear, kind eyes.

"Yes," he said, in a low tone. I must go—I must."

"Then we shall travel together," said Mr. Cantillon quietly, taking out his pocket-book.

He was very tired: the day had been an exhausting one, and he rather dreaded the night journey, the disturbance of all his usual and most regular habits. But the task of stopping this young fellow now was evidently beyond his powers. He only now hoped to bring him back from Paris, having gained his full confidence in the meanwhile. What his arguments were to be he hardly knew. Words would be given him, he thought, and if he judged his man rightly they would not be given in vain.

At present, however, he did not feel equal to talking to him any more. He left him—his charge—smoking on the platform, and went to rest a little in the waiting-room, promising to be back in plenty of time for the train. Leaning back in the corner of a sofa, he fell fast asleep. People going in and out did not rouse him. At last, opening his eyes with a start, he thought it was a dark winter's morning in his own room at Bryans. The gas was burning rather dimly, and Geoffrey Thorne was standing by the sofa. He had stood there quite still for a minute or more, watching the Rector's calm face in sleep. No care, no disappointment, no agony of love and grief, could ever, it seemed, have troubled that peaceful countenance. But in another moment, after the first surprise of waking, Mr. Cantillon's eyes and smile

the same. I love Miss Latimer. I love her with all the strength I have, with my whole being. It's nothing new, you know. As a child she was my queen. But I met her again the other day at Herzheim, for my misery—not that I wish it otherwise, not even now. I've shocked you," he said with a slight laugh. "You had no idea—you thought you were travelling with a reasonable being. But now you see why I can't stop in Paris, gladly as I would do anything to help you."

Mr. Cantillon listened with a very grave face. He was in the midst of the storm now. It seemed to him better to take the young man's confidence as it was given, and not to betray, at least at present, any former knowledge of his hopeless passion.

"I don't think you a presumptuous fool," he said. "You have my sympathy, my true and hearty sympathy, my dear Thorne."

Geoffrey's broad, brown, capable hand closed firmly on the thin and delicate one that was held out to him.

"Yes, I am very sorry for you," the Rector went on. "I fancied yesterday at Mr. Farrant's, from something in your face and manner, that you were a good deal affected by the news I brought. And, by-the-bye, you ought to hate me as a bringer of evil tidings. But I'm glad you don't. I'm very glad you have told me this. I don't quite understand altogether. For instance, I don't know why you are going back in this hurry to Switzerland. I should have advised staying quietly at home, or, if that was too painful, seeking 'fresh woods and pastures new.' Do you mind letting me know what takes you back?"

Geoffrey did not answer at once.

"Of course you don't understand how I feel," he said abruptly. "I can't accept it like this, at a distance. I must see her again."

"Forgive my asking—why?"

"I must tell her—I must hear it from herself. I can't bear it like this—like a sheep, without a word."

There was a kind of bitter resentment in his tone now, and the good face had changed, hardened suddenly by the pain that found its way into words. Geoffrey neither felt nor seemed the better, at present, for his confidence in Mr. Cantillon.

But you don't believe it, then? Or—I can't suppose that you thought Miss Latimer bound to you in any way. Had

anything of the kind passed between you and her?"

Mr. Cantillon's tone had changed a little, too, at the faintest, remotest suspicion of any reproach to Porphyria. It would not have taken more than this to alter his opinion of Geoffrey; and he had not forgotten Miss Thorne's words—that her brother was not without hope.

"We will get to the bottom of this," thought the Rector, "This fellow is honest; it will not be difficult."

"I think she knew," said Geoffrey slowly, "something of what I felt. I think she must have known that she was all the world to me. And she did not—of course she cannot have known what she was doing—but I tell you that she did not exactly discourage me. She told me I had better go home this autumn—and she asked me to paint Miss Farrant's portrait for her. She knew I wanted to do something for her."

He broke off suddenly, turning his face to the window. Mr. Cantillon glanced at his profile with its strained look, and at the clenched hand which lay on his knee.

"And these little friendly things make you fancy," he said deliberately, "that Miss Latimer understood you, and meant to encourage you? My dear Thorne, will you listen to plain English? I have no doubt she liked you and admired your talent. I have as little doubt that if she had read you rightly, you would not have had even these small marks of interest to feed upon. You have known and admired her, you say, since she was a child. Have you ever known her do anything dishonourable, or mislead anybody wilfully? Hardly possible, I think. And if I were you, I should take this fact alone, this fact of her engagement to Captain Nugent, as a certain sign that she never understood you, that she never meant to encourage you, and that this leaf of romance in your life must be closed at once and for ever."

"It is impossible," said Geoffrey. His lips moved, but Mr. Cantillon hardly caught the words.

"Pray explain to me with what motive you are going to her now," he said. "I must confess that I totally fail to understand you."

"I have told you—I must see her again. I must tell her what she has done. I cannot give her up like this, without a word. Of course I know I am not her equal—still I'm not a mere clodhopper. I can do something—if it is only worshipping and

serving her. I wish now that I had told her at Herzheim—then she might have chosen between me and him. But she can do that still."

"After she has given her word to him?" said the Rector, smiling in spite of himself.

"You don't understand me, sir," Geoffrey said, with a sort of desperate stiffness. "Some things are life or death to a man; this is so to me. This news has been as bad as death to me—worse, because I must outlive it, I suppose. Surely, if nothing else, I may have the comfort of hearing her say she is sorry for me."

There followed a long silence. Ten minutes perhaps had gone by, and Geoffrey had not spoken again or moved. Then the Rector laid his hand upon his knee.

"My dear fellow, you think me unsympathetic, and as hard as nails. I could tell you things to prove the contrary; but, after all, that is of no consequence. I took a fancy to you yesterday, and every hour since I have liked you better and better. One of the things I have liked in you has been what I sometimes feel lacking in myself—manliness. This is a manly, generous nature, I have said when I looked at you. I thought you a really fine fellow. Do you know that I am changing my mind?"

Another silence, for Geoffrey made no reply.

"Miss Latimer is happy," the Rector went on. "She wrote me a very short letter, telling me of her engagement, and every line of it breathed happiness. Now she has a generous and unselfish nature. You are going to her because you feel that you cannot keep away. You will tell her what will vex and distress her extremely. And why? You can't delude yourself with the fancy that she will throw over this other man for you. You know she will do nothing of the kind. You are only going to spoil her happiness, to wound the kindest heart in the world, 'with views of woe she cannot heal.' You are going to fill her with self-reproach on your account, which I feel sure is utterly undeserved. You are going to make a most unfortunate scene, to lower yourself in her eyes. And all because—it is the truth, and I must speak it plainly—all because you love yourself better than you love her. Yes, indeed, Thorne. You talk in this distracted way of your love for her. Nonsense, stuff! You don't even know what love is. Whose pleasure, whose happiness are you seeking in all this? Hers or

your own? I tell you, love is beyond you. You know nothing about it—no more than you know about true manliness or self-control."

Did the Rector think that he was in his pulpit at Bryans church? He raised his voice as if he did, and went on preaching to Geoffrey in words that came straight from his heart. The young man listened without a change of feature: the train roared and thundered on through the dark, but he did not lose a word of the sermon. The Rector was too much carried away by his own earnestness to hear him murmur presently:

"I never pretended to be anything I'm not. I said I would go—and I must go—I must."

It was not for nothing, as Mr. Cantillon might have thought, that Geoffrey Thorne had a long line of yeoman ancestors behind him.

IN THE PEAK COUNTRY.

WHEN you mention Rowsley to one acquainted with Derbyshire, whether such acquaintance be with hills, rivers, dales, or health-giving waters, many pleasant associations will be conjured up. There is the "Peacock," that famous old inn which, from the seventeenth century downward, has offered its good cheer to succeeding generations of artists, fishermen, and the general crowd of tourists. And where is the river more fishable, the landscape more bright and full of charm? But it is as the station for Chatsworth that Rowsley concerns us this hot, dusty summer's day. White are the roads, and powdery is the dust, the summer's green all peppered with it, as it rises in clouds from the vehicles that are whirling to and fro. There is an omnibus for Chatsworth, according to trustworthy guide-books—an omnibus privileged to drive through the park—but the omnibus was filled before our train came in. And a dozen omnibuses would not contain the crowd that wants to reach Chatsworth in one way or another.

The best way, perhaps, is on foot, if one can get out of the hot, sweltering road, and the columns of dust that rise here and there; and, happily, at no great distance along the turnpike, where a brook comes babbling down from a cool-looking and shady wood, there appears in the stone wall beyond the little bridge a series of rough

alaba, set step fashion, which indicates in this country a practicable footpath beyond. And a happy little path it is, leading into the coolness of the wood, affording a mossy seat on the way, and the privilege of listening to the soft warbling of birds from the recesses of the wood. Little paths wind about in shade and chequered sunshine in the most inviting manner, but our way is indicated by a line of rude stone stiles, that can be traced across the open fields, where the kine are placidly feeding. From the hillside there is the gleam of a river here and there in the wooded valley; and puffs of dust from the highway, like the smoke from a line of skirmishers who are keeping up a brisk fusillade, curl among the trees. Then the footpath leads through fields and farmsteads down into a little village perched upon a pleasant little brook, with a solemn old manor house in grey stone, rather bare and gaunt, looking down on the cottage roofs. Crossing the dusty highway, we are fairly in the general footpath to Chatsworth. There is no mistaking the route. The boys of the village rush to open the gates, and little urchins lip, "Thith ith the way for Chatterth."

The footway crosses the river, and leads pleasantly along its margin towards the happy valley. It is the blue Derwent that comes wimpling down from the wild dales of the high Peak, past Hathersage and the grave of Little John, the famous henchman of Robin Hood. Sweet and pure it runs, falling over a curved stone weir with a soft, resounding murmur, the white foam of the falling water and the flashing line above giving effect to the slopes of emerald turf, the hanging woods, the rich glades edged with glowing colours, the balustraded terraces, the mellow magnificence of the great house itself, that now appears with all its grandiose surroundings.

A beautiful bridge, gleaming white among the foliage, brings us by a fine sweep of road under noble sycamores to the public entrance to the ducal palace, where all kinds of vehicles are drawn up, while a constant stream of visitors is arriving and departing. Now it is a four-horse brake from Buxton or Matlock filled with hopeful-looking patients who have broken loose for the day from hydropathic or other cures; or a waggon-load of teachers who are having their yearly treat; or a detachment of the Salvation Army; or a waggonette full of nurses, who have

perhaps come to keep an eye on the patients before-mentioned; or a string of vehicles on a contract job, bearing a cargo of neat, unadulterated trippers, who have bargained for the Peak in bulk, with Chatsworth and Haddon Hall thrown in. To these must be added a fair sprinkling of country-siders, who have come with all their bairns about them, including babes in arms and children of all sizes.

When a sufficient crowd has gathered the great iron gates are opened wide enough to admit the stream of people who trickle across the gravel to a chilly, dignified hall, where busts of distinguished statesmen glare icily upon us. And here we solidify into a kind of group, and are taken charge of by a young woman, who leads us round "au grand galop." Luckily, nobody is expected to describe the interior of Chatsworth, and we can enjoy in peace the march over acres of polished floors.

All is sumptuous, magnificent, leaving the palaces of Kings and Queens, as we have known them, a good way behind. But everywhere the best of the show is the splendid scene that is spread outside—the canals, the fountains, the wondrous gardens, the acres of flowering shrubs, the rosaries of indefinite extent, the richest sward, the brightest verdure, the choicest perfume charging the air with sweetness.

Still better is it to escape from the crowd of sightseers, and into the beauty and verdure of the park, with the cooling river, the white bridges, and the music of falling waters. Yet these accessories do not diminish the thirst that the broiling sun and sultry atmosphere has evoked.

"I wish you could 'arn the value of a pint," cries a jolly old eremite, who sells photos—when he can—by the bridge, to the driver of a fly, who has never a fare.

"It's a pity either on us can't," rejoins the driver in the same fraternal spirit.

The little colloquy suggests that if the funds were provided there would be no long distance to travel to procure the desired "quencher." And this proves to be the case, for just beyond the park gates lies the pretty little village of Edensor, a kind of toy village, comprised of cottages ornés, covered with creepers, and with pretty gardens about them, all scattered here and there, with no pedantic arrangement in the way of a street.

"I'm sure this house is too smart to sell things, mother," said the musical voice of a young woman, whose companion, a more

elderly personage, had halted at the door of one of these bijou mansions.

"Nonsense, Cynthia," said the elder; "here's a bill — 'Refreshments. Tea provided.'" And so there was, a very modest bill, inside the woodbine-covered porch. And within, in a pleasant shaded room, there was a long table spread with a white cloth, and sundry benches arranged as if guests were expected. But there was not a soul to be seen. Indeed, except the two ladies, who are clearly visitors like ourselves, not a creature have we seen about the village. After all, perhaps, is the whole a clever mechanical arrangement—a handle to be turned that sets the whole thing going, or possibly "a penny in the slot"?

Cynthia laughs pleasantly at the suggestion, but mamma cries "Nonsense!" and raps the table vigorously with her parasol, which strikes us as a hardy proceeding in this solemn and tranquil scene. But the lady's hardihood broke the spell, for suddenly there appeared a comely-looking old dame, who demanded in a somewhat injured tone:

"And what might ye be pleased to want?"

"Can we have hot water?" asks the other crustily.

"Well, it might be as you could," answers the dame with caution; but finding that her guests are of a peaceful character, she rapidly unbends, and discloses the fact that she has actually a kettle boiling on the kitchen fire—the kettle asserts itself at the moment by boiling over, and the old lady suddenly disappears to quell the tumult of the elements.

"Now, that's all right," said the elder Cynthia, mollified at the prospect of a cup of tea, and she opens her bag and produces a little canister of tea, a packet of sandwiches, and a cake. Everywhere in this country one may rely on a supply of hot water; farmhouses, cottages, all are ready to supply the wants of visitors in that way.

"Traditional hospitality! rubbish!" cries the downright Mrs. Cynthia; "threepence a head, that's what it is all over Derbyshire, including teapot and crockery, milk an extra, and find your own spoons!"

As for Cynthia the younger, she is a bright and pleasant girl, whose manner assuages her mother's asperities with much success. But our ways lie in different directions. Our track is towards Bakewell, and here we have experience of a Derbyshire

hill on a hot summer's day with the sun almost directly overhead, and shining down with great effect into a sunken lane with high stone walls on each side. Yet there is a fine view from the top of the hill of Chatsworth at large with all its features displayed. There, after all, is a bit of the forest primeval retained by the care of the Cavendishes. It was Chetel's worth or wood in the Saxon times, and of no great account to any one, till Bess of Hardwicke saw the advantages of the situation and planted the Cavendishes there, her favoured descendants.

The descent is rapid into Bakewell's pleasant town; with a hop, skip, and jump you descend the height it has cost so much labour to attain. It is a dignified little place, too, this Bakewell, with a county-town kind of air, and suggests itself as the capital of the Peak, though this might be disputed by other towns. "And where is this Peak of yours, anyhow?" asks an American who has travelled far to see it. He has formed the notion of a lofty mountain summit, after the fashion of Pike's Peak, or perhaps that of Teneriffe, standing boldly out from the surrounding scenery. But he has seen nothing as yet to correspond with his ideal; and the scenery in the neighbourhood he acknowledges to be pretty, but considers it insignificant when compared with the gigantic scale on which Nature has reared the mountains in his own favoured land.

There is a handsome church at Bakewell, which may be considered as the Westminster Abbey of the Peak country, for it contains the tombs of some of the most famous of its lords and rulers—notably that of Sir George Vernon, the King of the Peak, whose famous mansion of Haddon Hall, although not classed by our ancestors, like Chatsworth, as one of the wonders of the Peak, is and has long been its chief delight. And there is a fine mutilated cross which bears the stamp of high antiquity, and may even possibly be a relic of a British church in existence before the Saxon invasion.

With wide, clean streets, handsome, substantial stone houses, and good shops—especially in the pastrycook line, with Bakewell puddings strongly represented—which are delightful productions partaking of the nature alike of jam tarts and cheese-cakes—and with no slummy element in the outskirts, the streets running cleanly towards river, meadows, or pleasant hillsides, Bakewell is a pleasant place indeed. The river—it is the

Derbyshire Wye—comes sparkling down through the lush meadows, a pleasant field path winds here and there, leading in the direction of Haddon Hall. Hills close in gently around, and fringing woods descend and meet in the loftier groves that afford here and there a glimpse of a turret, or gleaming oriel, belonging to the old Hall. The simple outline of some more distant summit closes in the scene, which in soft beauty and luxuriance emulates the charm of the golden valley of the more famous but hardly more beautiful Monmouthshire Wye. Soft fleecy clouds whose shadows chase each other over the meadows, a deep blue sky, and bursts of flying sunshine, give a kind of enamelled finish to the landscape. But the flies! The Mayfly is rising from the river in its myriads, thousands are dimpling the surface of the streams, myriads are dancing away their brief existence over the meadows; and to these are joined the swarms of flies, aquatic and terrestrial, that abound and revel in this burst of summer weather. Green drakes and red spinners, dragonflies, and all the tribe of gauze-winged ephemerals, are sporting in the sunshine, or find a resting-place in the crevices of one's apparel.

There is something pleasantly mediæval about the arrival at Haddon Hall, where the gateway, with its pointed arch, is closed by the huge oaken gates studded with iron bolts, and a wicket opens into the shaded courtyard. Let us take a seat on the oaken bench outside under the shade of the hollow old sycamore. The way leads steeply down to the bridge and was made before coaches were thought of, or the necessity of having a carriage-drive had been imagined. Vehicles in plenty come rolling over the bridge and draw up in the open space below, and people are continually arriving at the gate, and in groups await their turn to enter. Not so many people as at Chatsworth, but still a respectable number, and those of every degree and from every part of the world.

There is the happy feeling at Haddon of visiting a place which the inmates have only just quitted, although the last of those inmates dates from the time of the Stuarts. The ceaseless stress and renewal caused by daily occupation has been spared the old house for near two hundred years, and everything bears the stamp of antiquity in the freshest of impressions. There is the old hall with its screens and musicians' galleries, the old antlers of the old stags that

were hunted by the old Kings of the Peak, the panels battered by the jack-boots of the eighty-four retainers who followed my lord to feast or fray. There is the dim dining - parlour, too, of a more refined age, with the delicate mouldings of its beautiful oriel window that looks out upon the ancient gardens; and the lovely drawing-room above with its oaken panels and fine carved cornices, done by native hands, doubtless, that had carved many an oaken screen and miserere. There are the old state bedrooms hung with tapestry, the faded hangings that were a little old-fashioned when Shakespeare wrote; and there is the beautiful gallery with its Jacobean dignity, the very newest of all the state rooms of Haddon, and yet scarcely newer than the Elizabethan age. Convincing, too, is the old four-poster with traditions of its having been pressed by the form of the Virgin Queen, and, even more so, the looking-glass in which she may have seen reflected her wrinkled, anxious features. And we climb up to the top of the tower, and look over the hoary battlements upon a scene of fertility and verdure, limited in extent but of wonderful richness and beauty, and below the mellow lines of the old Hall are easy to be traced the double quadrangle, the rooms of state, the nests of little chambers, the roof of the great hall, the turret of the little chapel.

It is when the pleasant young woman who takes us round throws open the doors of the little ante-room, and the light of day filtered through the overhanging trees reveals the old moss-grown steps, with the quaint balustrade, and the terraced walk beyond under the old yew-trees, that the real sentiment of the scene comes in. For these are Dorothy Vernon's steps, according to the tradition, by which she stole away on one night of festival to elope with her lover, who waited for her, with horses, by the bridge below.

And they are gone; ay, ages long ago
Those lovers fled away into the storm.

And then we are left to stroll about a little in the ancient garden, where interlacing yew-trees form a pillared roof, where

Ghostly shapes
May meet at noontide. . . .

The garden front of Haddon is, as everybody agrees, a perfect poem in stone—the calm, the seclusion, the desertion, all aid in the charm. And when you have gazed your fill, there is no more to be said or

done but to walk quietly away, and to hope that you may see the place again in your dreams.

But there is a significant tap on the shoulder from Cynthia's mamma — for Cynthia and her mother have turned up again—as we all go forth together into the outside world. "Hot water!" she suggests confidentially.

"Not at Haddon Hall?"

"Yes, at Haddon Hall. Follow me."

Yet it is not strictly in the Hall, but in a roomy old building with a great oak-framed roof, and an outside ladder leading to the upper chamber, which was probably a brewhouse in the days when the beards wagged all, over the potent ale, in the great hall. And here there is a homely kind of refreshment-room, and here we sit and sip Cynthia's mother's excellent Bohea, while the evening shades fall softly over Hall and wood, and close over the ancient gateway where people rest placidly on the great oak bench.

Perhaps after all the highway is the best route between Haddon and Bakewell, for it gives us in returning a succession of charming views of the old Hall. And if there is a little dust there are no tormenting flies.

Now at Bakewell station we meet our American friend in a certain state of elation. "I'm laid straight on to the Peak this time," he cries. "The Peak is at Castleton, and there I'm bound to go by the next train."

There is no railway to Castleton, indeed, nor within eight miles of the place; but that is a detail that does not concern the American. He reckons he'll get on by stage. But as for us, who are going in the same direction, the member of the party who knows most about the country suggests that we shall see most of the veritable country of the Peak by taking an early train in the morning to Chapel en le Frith, and walking over the hills to Peak Castle.

It is Sunday morning as it happens when we reach our station, and it seems from the number of people moving in different directions that chapels have increased numerically since the place took its name; though for the particular chapel in the forest thus commemorated there is only a modern church, of no great interest, to show. Of the forest itself, the great forest of the Peak, the hunting-ground of the Peverils, and of Kings and nobles after them, there is nothing to

be seen but barren moors, mosses, and naked hillsides. Yet there is a fine look-out over rolling hills and black-crested edges as we breast the steep ascent above the town. And now the rack of clouds is rolling up behind us, with driving sheets, half rain, half mountain mist, blotting out the prospect and wrapping us up in a chilly downpour. By sheltering here and there, now under the lee of a high stone wall, or among some bushes, or in a little hut the road-makers have left behind them, one avoids a wetting, and the clouds roll by and sunshine leaps forth, and everything looks bright, till the next shower looms up from the horizon.

When the summit of the hill range is reached, the view stretches over the wild and desolate region of Peak Forest, but still shows nothing beyond but the crests of unknown ridges. The road is finely terraced on the hillside, and below is a cup-like valley that looks like the bed of some ancient lake, with cattle feeding where of old monster reptiles may have wallowed. At first sight the basin has no outlet, but presently there opens out a strange kind of chasm, with sides of steep limestone cliffs topped with grassy knolls, a most strange and evil-looking pass, which bears the name of the Winyats or Windgates, because it is said there is always a strong breeze blowing up or down—that is, when there is not a gale or perhaps a tempest raging between those huge walls.

An old trackway passes through the Winyats, and the solitary figure of a man no bigger than a fly can be seen making his way into the giant chasm. But that is not our way. Our leader makes a sudden diversion to the left up a little narrow lane which seems to lead nowhere, and which does in fact lead into a mere foot-track. But the track leading between two rough rocky knobs brings us out on the crest of a steep ridge, with the sudden prospect of a grand valley of an altogether different character from anything we have yet seen. The head of the valley is lost in the wreathing clouds that gather there in portentous masses; but it stretches far and wide, without any visible outlet, fertile and cultivated, but shut in by savage heights and grim, austere-looking summits. Scattered here and there are solitary farmhouses, far apart, but nothing that can be called a hamlet is to be seen, and the aspect of the whole valley, peaceful and pleasant as it is, suggests a

loneliness and tranquillity that are almost sad. Close at hand, rising with a rugged sweep from where we stand, is the summit of Mam Tor, otherwise known as the Shivering Mountain, seamed with the entrenchments of some wild race that has passed away.

On the very floor of the valley beneath us, certain scratchings and diggings show where a new branch railway is to open up this lonely vale. But tourists may come and go, but yet they will never make the solitary vale appear peopled or move the solemn sadness that is the leading motive of the scene.

Following the lofty and noble ridge, and clearing the shoulder of the mother mountain, there opens out the view of a still more extensive vale, but of a totally different character. Sunny, pleasant, and smiling is the Vale of Castleton, with wide-stretching fields and pastures set in an intricate network of stone walls. The town with its grey roofs, the square sturdy church tower, appear in their sheltered nook, and above in a gleam of sunlight shines the square tower of Peveril's Castle on the Peak. There is no peakiness apparent here, for we look right down upon the Castle, and the mass of the hill above it dwarfs its pretensions, while the dark cleft in the hill that marks the cavern of the Peak seems little bigger than a mouse-hole.

But a rapid descent into the Vale of Castleton presents the scene from a different point of view. From the level floor of the valley the massive hills that seem to encircle the whole of the fertile plain show the full grandeur of their bulk. The knife-like ridges seen end on assume the appearance of tapering peaks, and thus it is small wonder if the first Saxon settlers who penetrated into this Ultima Thule of the plains called the place *Peke-lond*, and that the name has stuck to it ever since. That is the explanation, at all events, which we arrive at during an early dinner at the "Castle," where there is a baron of beef worthy of Peveril himself, and fit to be served in the halls of a King. But our theories do not satisfy the American, who has arrived in advance of us. He wants the whole Peak and nothing but the Peak, and he does not consider that yonder castle is placed where it ought to be, consistently with the published accounts of the same.

Yet the old tower looks down menacingly enough on the town below, and it seems

as if a well-aimed rock from its summit would crush anything in the way of a disturbance as one might crush an émeute of ants. And the climb up to the ruined encinte of the Castle gives a respectful notion of what it would have cost to storm the eyrie of the lord of the Peak. And the keep when you reach it is a fine specimen of the later Norman architecture; a square tower with flat buttresses, but once enriched at the angles with fine, round columns, with characteristic bases and capitals. The site, too, is a marvellous one. From one side of the tower you look down into a gigantic cleft, over two hundred feet in depth, at the bottom of which is the famous Peak cavern. On the other side is a chasm nearly as deep, and the narrow neck of land between the Castle rock and the main body of the mountain has been so pared and scarped as to be practically inaccessible.

As for the Peak cavern, that is not shown on Sundays, and so must remain for us, like Yarrow by the poet, unvisited. And we have a long walk before us, over a lonely road across the hills. It is a mining district that we now make the acquaintance of, with here and there a deserted shaft with half-decayed belongings, and at places the mounds of fresh workings, and a smelting furnace, perhaps, standing in a gloomy hollow. And halfway there is a mining village with some of its cottages roofless, and resolving themselves into heaps of more or less squared stones; and at one point a narrow, rigid-looking lane pointing direct for Buxton, has the reputation of being a Roman road, leading, perhaps, to some wonderful store of treasure—say to the rich mine of silver lead that produced those "pieces" that are found every now and then stamped with the Roman trade marks. Brisk walking brings us soon to Tideswell, where there was an ebbing well once famous, but like Will Watch "now forgot." And Tideswell is a mining village, too, but prosperous-looking, and with lads and lasses walking out in strings, but sedulously apart, and with the independent air of young people who have money in their pockets. There is a fine church, too, at Tideswell if one had time to stay; but there is a waggonette starting from the "Tideswell Inn," that rolls us comfortably through a succession of charming dales till we reach the loveliest of all, sweet Millar's Dale, that ought to be Millar's Daughter's Dale, in any way to

account for its charms. But our train is just due and there is not a moment to lose, even though we see Cynthia and her mother, who have just arrived. They are going to stop a week at Millar's Dale. Ah, why can't we stop a week there, too? But adieu, Cynthia, adieu Derbyshire, adieu the Peak! Our too brief holiday is over.

THE RED BEADS.

"KEEP them till we meet again," low the sailor said;
The feathery bloom of tamarisks waved o'er each dark young head,
The long waves crashed beside them, where the bark tossed on the tide,
As the young man gave his token to his fair betrothed bride.

"Keep them, oh, my darling, we sail to-night for Spain,
It may be many a weary day ere we two meet again;
Pray for me night and morning before our Lady's shrine,
And show the beads when I return, pledge that you still are mine."

The red beads dropping listlessly through each small, sunburnt hand,
She stood and watched the broad sail set, stood on the golden sand;
And threw, with quick, free gesture, her lover's parting back,
As through the clear blue water his boat clove glittering track.

"Give me the beads as token," the gallant Spaniard said,
As softly 'neath his passionate gaze drooped the shy, girlish head;
"And across the wild Basque Mountains to Saragossa fair,
To my old castle walls I'll take my Queen as lady there.

"Give me the beads as token, my charger frets the rein;
The moon will light us on our flight to safety, love, and Spain;
Come, oh, my sweet, delay no more; come, doubt and fear are over,
Give me the beads to say—"To-night come for your own, my lover."

And when the brave bark touched again on Biarritz rocky shore,
A fisherman looked long and keen for one who came no more
Dancing adown the pathway, where the tamarisks waved in air,
And those who loved him shrank to say, "She is as false as fair."

Deserted in a palace old, where Saragossa stands
Majestic o'er the olive slopes, while, through her feeble hands,
The red beads slowly filtered, the frail girl shivering wept,
To think how bright at Biarritz the long waves glittering swept!

JUDGEMENT HILL.

A WEST INDIAN STORY.

THE day had been hot to the limit of endurance, with the blue vault of the heavens pitilessly bare of clouds from

dawn. Beast and plant drooped in the fiery sunshine, and the slaves in the cane-fields beyond the little river moved sluggishly about their work, and had little to fear from their drivers' whips. Not a breath of wind stirred the air; Nature seemed utterly prostrate. The very cicadæ, usually so vigorous, chirped lazily or were silent. When, however, the sun dipped behind the hills, one might have expected the inhabitants of this mountain valley to find some refreshment in the cool of the night; but this evening the air was close and heavy, though, indeed, the little river babbling along its course gave to the mind a sense of coolness not experienced by the body. In the negro village some more especially light-hearted slave had started a song, but it fell flat. His fellows were too exhausted to care for song and dance.

As the sun sank, a party of travellers on horseback came slowly up the valley road towards the plantation, and, crossing by the ford, mounted to the owner's residence. As they approached, the planter himself came out upon the high stone steps before the door, and his shout brought to the front of the building a numerous contingent of house slaves, who welcomed the visitors with a burst of chatter and laughter. With much noise and confusion, occasioned by the presence of too many helpers, the new-comers alighted and mounted to the head of the steps, where they halted as if to take in the view.

And truly it was a scene beautiful enough to make one linger. A range of hills, whose jagged outline loomed clear against the western sky, shut out the prospect in that direction, and, like the back of some great lizard, wound sinuously northward to join the mass of the Blue Mountains, whose peak rose dim in the evening light. On this—the eastern—side a small alluvial plain, watered at its nearer edge by a small river, with its bordering wealth of dumb-cane, fern, and other herb, followed the windings of its girdling hills. The plain, now lying in the shadow of the hills, was planted with sugar-cane, whose rich green leaves and swollen stems gave promise of a wondrous crop. Near to the river stood the great white building known as the boiling-house; a little to the right the mill; and, still further away, the huts, partly hidden in a luxuriant growth of fruit-trees, which formed the village of the slaves, both white and black. For, curious as it may seem, there were white slaves

on the estate—remnants of Monmouth's rebels, and outcasts and criminals from England and Ireland. They had been bought with the planter's money, and were as much his goods and chattels as their black brethren.

On this side of the river the land rose sharply to form a ridge far loftier than the opposite one, so that the public road—if the rough track may be so designated—took here a sudden upward turn. At one point immediately above the river-ford the ridge uplifted itself into a sharp peak, a clear three hundred feet above the valley, and just below this, nestling closely into the mountain side, at a spot where a little level ground offered an inducement, was the Great House, or planter's residence. This building had few pretensions to architectural beauty—fewer, indeed, than the boiling-house across the river. It was a long, low structure, with a lower portion of stone, and an upper storey of wood. An arch of stone steps gave access to the front door, by which one entered a wide passage running the whole length of the house. This passage, or piazza, as it was called, was lighted by numerous windows, protected on the outside by heavy wooden shutters, useful in times of hurricane. Opening from this piazza into the inner rooms were also other windows, serving not so much for lighting as for cooling these apartments; and it seemed to have been the object of the local builders of two hundred years ago to get as many doors and windows into each room, in which effort they had succeeded admirably. So the dining-room, which lay next to the piazza, had a door and two windows opening into this passage, two windows looking out upon the canefields, a door leading to the back part of the building, and two other windows between it and the bedrooms.

The furniture of the Great House was of that cumbersome nature which seemed to suit our forefathers, yet modified somewhat to adapt itself to the luxurious life of the early planters. It was for the most part of mahogany, carved and decorated so as to reflect in some degree the position and consequence of the master of the house. In the dining-room the most noticeable feature was the great sideboard, with its semicircular front and wealth of deep drawers, some fitted for the keeping of wine, and the rest devoted to the custody of the various garniture of the table. Its top was adorned with a display of glass and silver ware such as only the

Governor's house could equal, and in the middle, flanked on either side by tall silver candelabra, was a great punch-bowl. The punch-bowl was an institution with the old planter. Every morning were its contents renewed, and no sooner did a visitor arrive than he was brought to the sideboard and a glass of punch ladled out for him. In these times, when taverns were not, every man's house was open to his fellow, and whatever the vices of the inhabitants may have been, that of inhospitality could never be charged against them.

Preparations for a banquet in honour of the planter's visitors were going forward. The house slaves were busy between the dining-room and the kitchen in the yard. One whose special duty it was to see after the wine was occupied in keeping moist the muslin jackets in which the bottles were placed, so that by the evaporation of the water in the dry, hot air the liquid might be brought to a temperature pleasant to the palate. At seven the meal was served with much show of luxury. Behind each chair stood a servant to wait on the guest before him, three or four were at the open door to receive and bring in the dishes as they came from the kitchen, and a whispering from the passage denoted that there were several more hanging about outside the door. A half-caste, clad in livery, presided over the servants in the capacity of major-domo or butler, and saw that none of the company wanted for anything.

At the head of the table sat the planter, a tall, spare man, of some forty years. His good features, light curling moustache and pointed beard, a manner at once easy and assured, and, above all, his speech marked the refinement of good birth and breeding, and one might easily have been deceived by these outward graces to count him for what he was not. Free as was life in Jamaica—at that time the most brilliant dependency of England—untrammelled and unlicensed as was the conduct of most of the settlers from Governor downwards, yet this man's career was freer from restraint, more reckless in its immorality, more diabolical in its contrivances for providing unholy entertainment for himself and his boon companions, than that of any of his neighbours. In a community that winked at all the faults and most of the vices of poor human nature, he had acquired for himself a reputation and notoriety which confined his friendship to a very small circle. Sprung

from a noble family; he had squandered the greater part of his patrimony in England, and, finding his course in that country was almost run, had joined the tide of penniless adventurers, criminals fleeing from justice, ruined men of business, cut-throats and Jews, which now set in strong flow to the new Eldorado of Jamaica. More wise than his fellows, he had obtained, soon after his arrival, a patent of the land for a sugar estate, and contrived to borrow the money for the purchase of slaves and other stock. The virgin soil yielded a golden harvest, and within very few years the broken-down adventurer found his condition restored to its early state of ease.

These were the days of the buccaneers, who, under the guise of fair trade, carried on the freest piracy, plundering, not at all to the dissatisfaction of the English Government, the settlements of the French and Spanish, and not infrequently, when it might be done with safety to themselves, committing acts of robbery and violence upon the ships of their own nationality.

Many of the buccaneer captains were adventurers of good birth who, like the planter, had wasted their property, and now recruited their fortunes on the high seas. They were in close league and partnership with merchants and others, who found the wherewithal to fit out the ships for the expeditions, and who took a great share of the plunder as a reward for the risk they ran. The planter, not content with the gains accruing to him from his sugar estate, had joined partnership with one of the buccaneers, and it was his colleague himself who had arrived that evening. Their ship, in company with another, had just arrived at Port Royal from plundering the settlements of the French islands, and never in the history of the place had such wealth been brought to it. Fabulous stories still exist of the abundance and richness of the booty, of the vast number of gold coins, of the gold and silver vessels, of the fine silks; and men tell that there were no warehouses large enough to store the wealth, and that it was piled up on the wharves and guarded day and night by armed sailors.

With the buccaneer there had arrived a dark girl, not without some pretensions to beauty, whose broken speech and languid manner betokened her creole origin; a red-faced, husky-voiced captain of the garrison; and a thin, pale merchant, with whom

both buccaneer and planter had business relations.

Such was the company gathered around the table at the Great House. There was an unmistakeable air of jollity about them as tongues, loosened by wine, wagged busily, and the laugh and jest went round. The contagion of merriment spread to the servants, whose laughter and chatter came audibly from the passage without. They, too, having got possession of a bottle of wine, were making merry.

The dinner was nearly ended, the hue of the officer's face was deeper than at first, and his voice more hoarse, and the pale face of the merchant wore a somewhat hectic flush. All were evidently preparing for a carousal which would last till each man was incapable of drinking any more wine, and then the servants would bear him off to bed.

At this point an incident occurred destined, if not to shorten the carousal, yet to divest it of much of its customary enjoyment. As one of the servants was handing a bottle of wine, a low, inarticulate cry burst from his lips, and he let the bottle fall to the table, shivering into pieces a glass or two, and sending a stream of wine into the very bosom of his master. With an oath the planter snatched up the bottle, intending to send it at the fellow's head for his carelessness, but as he looked up and saw the stricken look upon the countenances of his guests, an intimation of something unusual caused him to follow their gaze with his eyes. Standing in the doorway which led from the room to the front piazza was a shape whose sudden and unexpected appearance sufficed to strike a chill of terror to the minds of the revellers. In the dimness of that part of the room the figure seemed of gigantic proportions; but to one nearer to the door it would have been found to be that of a tall, gaunt man, clad in doublet, breeches, and hose of a sober brown hue. A pair of eyes which burnt with a fierce intensity was turned upon the company with a truly mesmeric effect. They would fain have escaped the terribly earnest gaze if any power had been left to their bodies, but they were enchained by a strength greater than theirs. Suddenly the strange visitant began to speak, and his first words deepened in the minds of his hearers the impression of his unearthly origin.

"Workers of iniquity! I bring to you this message. Abandon your evil ways and turn, for a day of wrath is at hand. Now

you eat and drink and are clothed in fine linen, and make merry over your fine meats and strong wines, but to-morrow you shall be fed with tears. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. You are an abomination in the sight of the Lord; you spend your days in wickedness and your nights in sloth. The Lord will bring upon you your own iniquity and shall cut you off in your wickedness, yea! the Lord God shall cut you off."

For a moment the speaker's voice trembled as if in pity for his audience, and then rose in one passionate outburst.

"Fools! Infidels! Followers of Baal! The Lord reigneth. God is a jealous God! Why seek ye to destroy yourselves? Flee from the wrath to come. I see the hand of the Almighty raised to strike and none may stay it. The hills shall melt as wax before His hand. Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord, I will repay!"

Hardly had these threatening words passed the lips of the old Puritan than the report of a firearm rang out clear and loud, and the room was filled with the pungent, heavy smoke of the powder. It was the buccaneer, who had drawn a pistol and fired. The spell was broken; the affrighted servants fled in a body from the room; chairs were thrown violently to the floor as the company sprang to their feet. The planter, still grasping his bottle by the neck, rushed to the doorway and thence to the entrance. Nothing was to be seen; but, rising distinctly to the sharpened hearing of the listeners, there came through the still night the clatter of a horse's shoes on the road below. Silently each listened to the sound while it grew less and less audible, and was finally lost in the distance; and then they looked blankly into each other's faces.

In spite of the desperate efforts of the planter to restore animation to his guests, merriment had fled from the Great House for that night and would not be coaxed to return. Though the drinking was as hard and as continuous as on former occasions, the customary riot and buffoonery which accompanied these carousals were absent, and the servants carried master and guests to bed at an unusually early hour.

The night kept hot with a brilliant moon; not a trace of mist gathered in the valley to cool the drooping shrubs. The sun rose in a cloudless sky, shining down upon an earth unrefreshed by shade

of night. The shell which was sounded in early morning by the slave-drivers brought out the gangs to work among the canes, and pitiful, indeed, was the condition of the white bond-servants as they dragged themselves from their miserable huts into the fields. Hot as were the previous day and night, this day was hotter. The heavens seemed made of molten brass, pouring down upon wretched mortals a fiery heat, until the surface of the earth cracked and the air above it was a mass of quivering movement. Never had any one experienced such heat in June.

The company at the Great House had taken coffee in bed, as was the custom, and at eleven o'clock were gathered around the table for the "second breakfast." The incident of the previous night had lost most of its disagreeableness, and they could now jest and laugh at the effect it had had upon them. The meal progressed; it was twenty minutes to twelve.

"Thunder in a clear sky," suddenly exclaimed the planter, with a reminiscence of his early schooling. "The gods are for us. Drink, gentlemen, to a long and merry life."

A distant rumbling in the heavens occasioned the remark, and the proposed toast was about to be drunk when a louder report resounded through the hills. All started at the suddenness of the thing, and the slaves in the fields dropped their implements. The earth gave a gentle heave, and men knew what was upon them. Paralysed with fear, they awaited the second shock of the earthquake. It followed quickly upon the first, throwing the glasses from the table and recking the house, while doors banged and windows rattled. Still it was not a very severe shock; each of the company had experienced worse shocks than this. Then suddenly, as if Mother Earth had gathered herself together for one final effort to get rid of her human encumbrances, there came such a shiver through the whole fabric of the island that men were dashed to the ground, houses levelled, the very earth gaped, and the greater part of Port Royal, with all its wealth and wickedness, was swallowed up by the sea. And upon the planter's abode and household fell that vengeance foretold by the Puritan; for the whole mountain overhanging the house flung its great bulk into the valley beneath and overwhelmed everything in one great crash of ruin.

To this day there remains the rough, uneven slope of rock, rubble, and earth under which lie the Great House and the bones of its occupiers. No tree, strange as this may seem, will grow there, only the most rank and foul herbs flourish on the spot; and over it hangs the awe inspired by this fearful end. It is the place of desolation—the Judgement Hill.

WOODEN LEGS.

WHO first invented wooden legs? Vulcan was a cripple, and in consequence of his difficulty in walking he is said to have made himself an artificial support of gold; but, as Mr. Thoms pointed out long ago, gold is not for every cripple, and every myth is backed by a reality. Again, the devil, as represented in the drawings and engravings of the Middle Ages, is a compound of Pluto and Vulcan. The latter was ejected from Olympus, the devil was cast out of heaven. Vulcan was frequently figured with a beard and pointed cap. In the edition of Tyndale's New Testament, printed by Jugge in 1552, there is a woodcut representing the devil sowing tares, and wearing not only the Vulcanian beard and pointed cap, but also a wooden leg. Another mediæval representation of the devil with a wooden leg may be found in one of the paintings on the panels of the pulpit in the ancient little church of Heligoland. It is only fair, however, to point out that the artificial support in the Tyndale woodcut resembles more a clumsy, one-legged stool, upon which the lame leg appears to be doubled up at the knee, than a substituted wooden limb. After all, this identification, so far as regards costume and lameness, of the mediæval devil and the ancient Vulcan, although it opens up a curious field of speculation to those who are learned in matters of comparative mythology, yet throws no certain light on the question as to when the wooden leg as we now know it—a complete artificial substitute for a lost limb—was first invented.

It is impossible to give an exact and definite answer to the question; but there is some evidence to show that in the sixteenth century a wooden leg was regarded as somewhat of a novelty. One of the most famous surgeons France has ever produced was Ambroise Paré. He was surgeon to several of the French Kings, and when, as a Protestant, his life was in

danger, at the time of the St. Bartholomew massacre, the King, Charles the Ninth, saved him by shutting him up in his own closet. His works, filling a great folio, were published towards the end of the sixteenth century, and went through many editions. In the fifth edition, published at Paris in 1598, there is figured a wooden leg which is practically the same as the article in use at the present time, and Paré gives such a very minute description of it that it is only reasonable to conclude that such a contrivance was then an unfamiliar object.

The one discovery above all others that has made Paré famous for all time, was the plan, which he was the first to suggest, of tying the arteries after the surgical removal of a limb. In one part of his writings he gives a curious account of a case of successful amputation, in which he appears to have anticipated one of the latest of modern fads, and to have used music as medicine. The patient had been wounded in battle. The famous surgeon took him in hand, successfully amputated the limb, using his new plan of tying the arteries, and when the sufferer began to mend, prescribed what the quaint English of the translation describes as "a consort of violins and a jester to make him merry." In a month the patient was able to hold himself up in a chair, and was carried down to the gate of his castle to see the people pass by.

A successful issue to such an operation must have been of rare occurrence, for we are told that "the country people of two or three leagues about, knowing they could see him, came the first day, male and female, to sing and dance pell-mell in joy of his amendment, all being very glad to see him, which was not done without good laughing and drinking."

"The camp being broken up," concludes Paré, "I returned to Paris with my gentleman, whose leg I had cut off. I dressed him, and God cured him. I sent him to his house merry with his wooden leg, and was content, saying that he had escaped good cheap not to have been miserably burned."

The success of Paré's comparatively simple and safe mode of procedure, as compared with the barbarous methods formerly in use, which inflicted horrible agony on the sufferer, and too often ended in failure, must have led to a considerable growth in the demand for artificial limbs, and the wooden leg, which, if not invented by the great French surgeon must certainly have been greatly improved by him, became

a more frequent adornment of the wounded heroes of those fighting days. Allusions to it as the common reward of the soldier's or sailor's valour are plentiful in our own Elizabethan literature. Naashe speaks of the young fire-eater who would go to the wars for honour, and return with a wooden leg, "when he may buy a captainship at home better cheape;" and of the young sailors who must needs be men of war, and wear silver whistles, but some of whom will come home with wooden legs and some with none. Hogarth has pointed the same moral in his picture of "Chairing the Member," where a very prominent figure is a sailor with a wooden leg. In Beaumont and Fletcher's comedy, "Rule a Wife and Have a Wife," a cripple is taunted with his lameness by a soldier:

Dost thou see how thou pull'st
Thy legs after thee, as they hung by points?

whereon the cripple retorts:

Better to pull 'em thus, than walk on wooden ones.

Later, in Restoration times, the dramatists were still fond of associating soldiers and artificial limbs. In Wycherly's "Plain Dealer," Olivia, rallying Manly, says: "We women adore a martial man, and you have nothing to make you more one, or more agreeable, but a wooden leg." In another play of the same era, Killigrew's "Parson's Wedding," there is a curious lady who is said to hate a man with all his limbs, and so "her gentleman-usher broke his leg last dog-days, merely to have her set it." But the devotion of this hero nearly cost him his life, for gangrene attacked the wounded limb, which spoiled the jest and his ambling before my lady. A hand-saw was applied, says the narrator, to his "gartering-place, and now the rogue wears booted bed-staves, and destroys all the young ashes to make him legs."

This eccentric lady would have doted on the unfortunate crane that Evelyn saw in 1664 in the St. James's Park menagerie. This poor bird, having broken one of its legs, had lost the limb, and had acquired instead a wooden leg and thigh, made by a soldier, and so accurately jointed that the creature could walk and use it as well as if it had been natural. Not long ago a cow, similarly provided with an artificial leg, might have been seen at the veterinary hospital in the north-west of London.

The prevalence in the seventeenth century of these mementoes of hard-fought fields naturally led to their use by impostors for the purpose of beguiling the

charitable. In the old play of the "Beggars' Bush" there is a catalogue of the cheats then in use by sturdy beggars, and among their means of exciting compassion were "crutches, wooden legs, false bellies, forced eyes and teeth," with other gruesome devices. Most of these dodges are still part of the stock-in-trade of the begging fraternity. Hazlitt has a story of an old gentleman who used to walk out every afternoon, carrying a gold-headed cane, in the fields opposite Baltimore House, which were then open and crossed by footpaths. He was often accosted by a beggar with a wooden leg, whom repeated alms only made the more importunate. One day when the rascal was more persistent than usual in his annoyance, a well-dressed stranger came up, who said to the old gentleman: "Sir, if you will lend me your cane for a moment I'll give him a good thrashing for his impertinence." The victim smilingly complied, but as the stranger lifted the cane to apply it to the beggar's shoulders, the rascal whipped off his wooden leg and ran away at full speed. His would-be chastiser took up the chase; the faster the beggar ran the faster followed the pursuer, until, to the great astonishment of the old gentleman, both pursuer and pursued, having crossed the fields, turned a corner, and nothing more was seen of either of them. The sham cripple did not return, neither did the gold-headed cane. There is but little novelty in the ways of knavery. Most of the tricks of the begging fraternity are as old as the hills, and may be reckoned among the time-honoured institutions of the country.

Wooden-legged characters appear occasionally in fiction, but on the whole they have not been very well treated. There seems sometimes to be an assumed connection between wooden legs and wickedness. One of the earliest maimed characters in English fiction is the amiable but overpoweringly nautical Lieutenant Hatchway in Smollett's "Peregrine Pickle." His character may pass muster, but what can one say of that hypocritical rascal Silas Wegg in "Our Mutual Friend"? Was he not a "literary man, with a wooden leg"? a decoration which, to Mr. Boffin, appeared greatly to enhance the value of Mr. Wegg's remarkable attainments. Wegg stumped his way into the Golden Dustman's affections, and read that simple old gentleman strange tales from his eight volumes of the "Decline And-Fall-Of-The-Rooshan-Empire," bound in red and gold,

with purple ribbon in every volume to keep the place where they left off, at the not excessive rate of fivepence per hour, and when he "dropped into poetry" was kind enough to make no extra charge, but only asked to be considered so far in the light of a friend. Mr. Wegg is succeeded in the possession of villainy and a wooden leg by that very truculent, timber-toed knave, Long John Silver. No reader of "Treasure Island" is ever likely to forget Long John, the leader and arch-conspirator of the piratical crew of the "Hispaniola."

Silas Wegg, by the way, is not the only wooden-legged character in "Our Mutual Friend." A more amiable victim of amputation legs, as soldiers call such adornments, appears at the marriage of John Rokesmith and Bella Wilfer, only to disappear on the next page, in the shape of old Gruff and Glum, the pensioner, who pegged away on his timber toes—he had two of them—"as if he were scoring furiously at cribbage," to be present at the wedding, and afterwards kissed the bride's hand right gallantly, and retired to unlimited tobacco and beer.

In "Martin Chuzzlewit," mention is made of Mr. Gamp, deceased, who was blessed with an artificial limb, which was finally disposed of in a very remarkable manner indeed.

"Ah, dear!" said Mrs. Gamp to Mr. Pecksniff; "when Gamp was summoned to his long home—and I see him a lying in Guy's Hospital with a penny-piece on each eye, and his wooden leg under his left arm—I thought I should have fainted away; but I bore up." To this obituary notice may be added the fact, important to biographers, who always value a reference to engraved portraits of their heroes, that over Mrs. Gamp's mantelpiece was suspended a portrait of Mr. Gamp, deceased, drawn at full length, so that the likeness might be rendered more obvious and forcible by the introduction of the wooden leg. Mr. Pecksniff, when he was carried upstairs, asking vainly for a little drop of something to drink, after the famous dinner at Todgers's, and had been put to bed, appeared shortly afterwards, strangely attired, on the top landing, and addressed the inmates of Todgers's in the hall below. "'This is very soothing,' said Mr. Pecksniff. 'Extremely so. Cool and refreshing; particularly to the legs! The legs of the human subject, my friends, are a beautiful production. Compare them with wooden legs, and observe the difference between

the anatomy of nature and the anatomy of art. Do you know,' he continued, leaning over the bannisters, with an odd recollection of his familiar manner among new pupils at home, 'that I should very much like to see Mrs. Todgers's notion of a wooden leg, if perfectly agreeable to herself!'" Unfortunately Mr. Pecksniff was unceremoniously taken back to his room, and the key turned upon him, and Mrs. Todgers's notion of a wooden leg remains a matter of speculation. As to Mr. Richard Swiveller, it may reasonably be assumed that when he made his complaint to Mr. Quilp, "Yet loved I as man never loved that hadn't wooden legs," he was not so much thinking of wooden legs themselves as availing himself of the first convenient rhyme to "Cheggs."

One other appearance of wooden legs in literature may be mentioned. In the one hundred and nineteenth letter of Goldsmith's exquisite but little read "Citizen of the World," there is a long narrative by a poor disabled soldier of his adventures ashore and afloat. In his capacity for preserving his cheerfulness this man was a perfect Mark Tapley. At the beginning he says that he cannot pretend to have gone through more than others. "Except the loss of my limb," he continues, "and my being obliged to beg, I don't know any reason, thank Heaven, that I have to complain; there are some who have lost both legs and an eye; but, thank Heaven, it is not quite so bad with me."

The humble philosopher then describes his early workhouse training, his apprenticeship to a farmer, succeeded by a wandering life, working when he could get employment, and starving when he could get none, until, for the heinous offence of knocking down a hare, he was sentenced to be transported to the plantations. This did not daunt him. "People may say this and that of being in gaol; but, for my part, I found Newgate as agreeable a place as ever I was in in all my life." From prison he was carried on board ship, and in time, after losing many of his companions by fever, was put ashore and sold to a planter. When his time was expired he returned to England, became a soldier, fought and was wounded at Fontenoy, and when peace was made, enlisted in the East India Company's service. He fought the French in six battles, and came home with forty pounds saved, but only to be seized by the press-gang and sent on board a man-of-war. His ship was taken by the French,

he lost his forty pounds, and was thrown into prison. He escaped with a companion and went to sea in an open boat, whence they were rescued by an English privateer, which in its turn was taken by a French man-of-war, which again was retaken by an English privateer, and the adventurer was once more in England, having lost in the last action a leg and four fingers of the left hand.

"Had I had the good fortune," remarked this cheerful cripple in winding up his narrative, "to have lost my leg and use of my hand on board a King's ship, and not a privateer, I should have been entitled to clothing and maintenance during the rest of my life; but that was not my chance. One man is born with a silver spoon in his mouth, and another with a wooden ladle. However, blessed be God, I enjoy good health, and have no enemy in this world that I know of but the French and the Justice of the Peace." And the veteran stumped off, leaving the Chinese philosopher possessed with the belief that an habitual acquaintance with misery is the truest school of fortitude and philosophy.

The wooden leg has made no great figure on the stage, except in one conspicuous instance; but it played a humble part in the training of young Edmund Kean. Edmund had an uncle named Moses Kean, who had a wooden leg, and when the young actor was studying "Hamlet" under his early friend and teacher, Miss Tidswell, and had to say the words, "Alas, poor Yorick!" she at first taught him to say "Alas, poor uncle!" so that the recollection of the latter's loss might dispose Edmund's face to seriousness. But the one prominent theatrical appearance of a wooden leg was in the case of the famous Foote. Singularly enough, some years before he lost his leg, Foote played in one of his farcical pieces, called "The Orators," the part of Peter Paragraph, in which he had to simulate the possession of an artificial limb. Paragraph was a satirical portrait of a certain Dublin alderman and newspaper proprietor named George Faulkner, who, being far from young, decidedly plain, and the possessor of a wooden leg, was accustomed to boast of his own personal attractions and of the powerful influence they had with the ladies. A year or two after the piece was first produced, Foote was thrown from his horse and sustained a fracture of the leg, which necessitated amputation. The actor's spirit was not easily broken. He at once

declared that he should now be able to imitate George Faulkner better than ever. Peter Pindar was of the same opinion. In his "Bozzy and Plozzi" he wrote:

When Foote his leg by some misfortune broke,
Says I to Johnson, all by way of joke,
Sam, sir, in Paragraph will soon be clever,
He'll take off Peter better now than ever.

In fact, the loss of his leg made Foote a more amusing actor and a more irresistible "draw" than he had been before. O'Keefe says that one could not help pitying him sometimes as he stood upon his one leg, leaning against the wall, with sorrowful face, while his servant was adjusting the stage false leg; but as soon as that was done, he instantly resumed "all his high comic humour and mirth, hobbled forward, entered the scene, and gave the audience what they expected—their plenty of laugh and delight." A year or two after his accident he wrote a farce called the "Lame Lover," with a wooden-legged hero, Sir Luke Limp, to suit himself. Charlotte, whom Sir Luke courts, declares that it would be a pretty thing truly for a girl at her time of life to be tied to a man with one foot in the grave, and is not to be appeased by the fact that the knight is proud of his leg, and had often been heard to declare that he would not change his bit of timber for the best flesh and bone in the kingdom. A friend once spoke jestingly to Foote about his game leg, whereon the actor retorted, "Pray, sir, make no allusion to my weakest part; did I ever attack your head?"

Wooden legs have figured occasionally with great effect, and sometimes rather comically, in real life. When George the Third visited Weymouth in July, 1789, shortly after his recovery from his first attack of illness, the Mayor and burgesses of that town presented him with an address, and asked leave to kiss hands. His Majesty consented, but as the Mayor advanced to take the Queen's hand, just as he might that of any Mrs. Smith or Mrs. Mayor, a member of the Court, Colonel Gwynn, whispered: "You must kneel, sir!" But the Mayor took no notice and kissed the Queen's hand erect. As he retired, the Colonel again whispered him: "You should have knelt, sir!"

"Sir," answered the Mayor, "I cannot."

"Everybody does, sir."

"Sir, I have a wooden leg."

The excuse was a good one, but as Fanny Burney, who tells the story, says, the absurdity of the matter followed when

all the rest did the same, taking the same privilege without the same excuse. A few years later, in Paris, a wooden leg saved the life of the well-known Gouverneur Morris, then the American Minister to France. At the time when the Parisian mob was in a very rabid state, and it was dangerous to appear well-dressed or to ride in a carriage, Morris was driving one day through the city. A mob collected, yelling against him as an aristocrat, and denunciation as an aristocrat was generally followed by summary execution; but the American Minister did not lose his presence of mind. He thrust his wooden leg out of the carriage window and shouted: "An aristocrat! Yes, one who lost his leg in the cause of American liberty."

The mob cheered and let him pass. The Minister had really lost his leg by a carriage accident in 1780. A friend at the time comforted him by pointing out how much freer from temptation to dissipation he would be with only one leg. Morris replied: "My good sir, you argue the matter so handsomely, and point out so clearly the advantages of being without legs, that I am almost tempted to part with the other."

After the Napoleonic wars wooden legs were very common sights in Paris. When Samuel Rogers visited the French capital a few months after Waterloo, he wrote to his sister that he thought there were more men there without a leg or an arm than he had ever seen anywhere. "At a dance on the boulevard last night," he writes, "a Frenchman quadrilled and waltzed on a wooden leg with an agility and neatness of execution such as I have not often seen on a natural one."

Another famous American possessor of a wooden leg was the fighting Peter Stuyvesant, the last Dutch Governor of New York. The heroic Peter was so proud of his appendage that he often declared he valued it more than all his other limbs put together. He had it curiously inlaid with silver; a proceeding which gave rise to a legend that he wore a silver leg, like an early version of Miss Kilmansegg, whose precious leg, by the way, was made of gold. Stuyvesant ruled New York, or New Amsterdam, as it was then called, from 1647 to 1664, and a very vigorous ruler he was. The history of his reign may be read by the curious in the veracious chronicle of Diedrich Knickerbocker.

Among noteworthy possessors of artificial limbs, lovers of Scott will not forget Dominie Thamsen. George Thomson, according to what Lockhart calls the universal credence of the neighbourhood of Abbotsford, was held to be in many respects the original of the inimitable Dominie Sampson. He was the son of the minister of Melrose, and for many years was domesticated at Abbotsford, as tutor and librarian. Notwithstanding his wooden leg, which replaced a limb lost in boyhood, Thomson was vigorous, athletic, a bold rider, and an expert at singlestick. Scott used to say that in the dominie, like himself, accident had spoiled a capital life-guardsmen.

A little more than a quarter of a century ago a wooden leg nearly changed the course of European history. A year or so before the war between Prussia and Denmark, which preceded the great struggle between France and Germany, Bismarck was staying at Biarritz. One morning, accompanied by a huge dog, he was walking on a road which runs along the base of a cliff, protected from the sea by a low wall, when he met an old French naval captain, with a wooden leg, but powerfully built and of peppery temper. The dog became unduly attentive to the captain's leg, and the Frenchman struck at the animal with the butt of his fishing-rod. Bismarck swore, and the sailor replied in the same dialect. From language they came to blows, and in a few moments Bismarck found that, strong as he was, the angry Frenchman was lifting him bodily on to the parapet of the wall. Another minute and he would have been in the rapid current of the sea below, and what would have been the course of European history during the last twenty-five years? But at the critical moment help arrived—by the irony of fate in the shape of an equerry of the Emperor Napoleon—the timber-toed veteran was defeated, and the unification of Germany and of Italy was secured.

THE LATE MRS. VERNON.

By A. MOBERLY.

Author of "*Lady Valeria*," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XIII.

"THERE, that's all worth reading," said Miss Pexton, "unless you want to look at the signature. Here it is at the bottom,

'Fanny Burridge, now Pexton,' all lawfully witnessed, 'Martha Pexton,' that's me, and 'Albert Fosbery,' that's the lodger as took it down. Now you can say whether it's worth twenty pounds to you or not," and she folded the sheets together and put them back in the envelope.

"It is not worth twenty pence to me personally," I answered her very slowly, for I was calculating its possible value in Admiral Gordon's eyes, "but——"

"Then I shall go straight down to Shropshire and chance getting twice as much from Mr. Vernon to put it in the fire."

"No, I don't think you will do that. I should not imagine that Mr. Vernon cares in the least what your stepmother's opinion of him may be. Besides, I see that the date is three months old. You have no doubt tried to do business with him already."

That was a good shot, I saw directly.

"Well, suppose you make an offer," she said sullenly, "or perhaps you don't care if I make away with it now," and she made a feint of tossing it in the fire.

"I care just one pound," I told her. "And then I may be offering more than it is worth. How do I know that you have not manufactured the whole statement yourself, signatures and all? You ought to have got a magistrate, or at least a clergyman to sign, to make it worth anything."

I fancied by her face that she had heard that objection before.

"Then all the people interested in it are dead and gone except Mr. Vernon and Josephine; that takes away from its value."

She gave a little scoffing laugh.

"Do you really think you can take me in that way? Well, as a friend of the late Mrs. Vernon," with sarcastic emphasis, "suppose we say five pounds?"

The sudden fall in her price looked suspicious. She was quick enough to notice it, and continued her sentence hastily. "Five pounds down, that is, and the other five pounds if I prove it all square to your satisfaction."

"How will you do that?"

"You come along with me at once; it won't take you half an hour, and you shall see Fanny for yourself—Mrs. Jacob Pexton, I mean. You can ask her what you like, and she can show you some of your things she's kept—the ivory-backed brush and a writing-case—Mrs. Vernon's

things, then, if you will have it. You shall have every proof she can give you. Come! you can't object to meeting her, when you're not Mr. Vernon, you know!"

The woman's eyes shone with greed and eagerness: "It won't take you half an hour. There's a cab outside. I kept it in case you wouldn't see me, or we didn't get on friendly. You can drive there and drive back. It's close to."

She was actually trembling with anxiety to close the bargain.

I began to get excited myself. There was a spice of adventure in the proceeding that just suited my mood. The statement, if genuine, might go far to reassure Bertram's father, especially if it came to him accompanied by the news of the unlucky Mrs. Vernon's death. Then I might learn more by actually seeing and questioning the interesting penitent Fanny. Lastly, it gave me a certain thrill of satisfaction to reflect here is one who can testify with certainty that, whoever I am, I am not the late Mrs. Vernon. I really think it was that last reflection which decided me. As to the money, I thought I might be justified in using some of the contents of Mrs. Vernon's purse for such an object.

"Five pounds down," I repeated firmly.

"What I may give you hereafter depends just on what your stepmother's information may be worth. I will make no promise."

I thought she must be honest, she caught at the arrangement so readily.

"I don't ask anything fairer than that. You come with me and you'll hear what'll be worth, ah, may be pounds and pounds, but I'll leave it to you to say, ma'am. Every one as is a well-wisher to Miss Muriel must be interested in clearing her poor ma's character."

I hesitated no longer. "I shall be ready in a few minutes," I said, and hurried to my room. There I quickly donned the rest of my borrowed plumage, the little fur-lined cloak, the big picturesque hat trimmed to match the dress, even the gloves with fur tops matching the rest were there. I hardly stopped to laugh at my transmogrified self, but, taking a five-pound note from my secret hoard, I hastened back to conclude my bargain.

Mrs. Brent caught me at the door.

"Going out, ma'am? Oh, dear, it's a bitter day. What would Dr. Millar say?"

"I'm not going far and I shall drive."

"Would you like any one to go with you, ma'am, as Miss Magrath is not here?"

"No, thanks. I shall be home in less than an hour."

"Very well, ma'am. But I was going to ask about that letter. My little nephew is here, he comes to dinner every other Sunday, and if you could trust him with it—he's as good a child as ever was—he'd take it for you at once."

I had put up my letter to Colonel Fortescue with the rings for Muriel and Mrs. Vernon's papers all together, and gave the parcel to Mrs. Brent with many cautions.

Martha Pexton looked suspiciously at me when I re-entered.

"You've not been playing any low trick, sending for the police or Colonel Fortescue—I beg your pardon, ma'am, but the pore creature is that delicate and nervous, and a shock might be the death of her," she ended, changing her tone when she saw the note in my hand.

She made some demur about delivering over the paper, but I stood firm and locked it up safely before we left the room. Mrs. Brent let us out and watched our departure with disapproving eyes. We passed the small nephew going on my errand with my parcel under his arm.

The drive was, as she had promised, a short one. The cab turned into a street of handsome houses that looked as if it had shut itself up for the winter. The windows of the one where we alighted were shuttered closely, and there was a bill, "To Let, Furnished," in one of them. I looked at Martha in surprise.

"My father is the caretaker," she explained, fitting her latch-key into the door. "The cab had better wait, we may not be here many minutes."

I assented, and followed her into the gloomy, echoing hall. The door banged heavily after us.

"Will you wait in here?" she asked, throwing open the door of a back room on the ground floor. The shutters were closed, but did not come within two feet of the top of the windows, so that there was sufficient light coming in from above. It was an uninviting room, apparently a small library or morning-room, divided by large folding-doors from the front room. The walls were covered with bookshelves at present shrouded in dust-sheets, and the furniture stacked in one corner. Miss Pexton dragged out an armchair for me and left me.

My courage cooled in the minutes that followed—how many I cannot guess—during which I waited for her return. I got tired of looking at the dusty bronzes and the stopped clock on the mantelpiece, the leather-covered writing-table with the round mark in the dust where somebody's hat had been put down. I thought it must have been a hat because of the size and shape, and I idly wondered if it were Mr. Pexton's, and whether he had brushed it before he went out. I supposed the Pextons lived in the basement, the house was so quiet.

Somebody must have arrived or departed while I sat there. I had heard the sound of the front door closing and the rattle of wheels. I fancied, too, I heard movements on the other side of the folding-doors, a footstep pacing to and fro. Then I distinctly heard the fire stirred. Whoever was there must be as solitary as myself, for I could hear no voices, only the restless footfall, and now that stopped.

My patience was strained to its utmost, and at last gave way, and I went to the door determined to find Martha Pexton, but got no further—the door was fast locked. At first incredulous, I gave the handle a smart turn and a shake, but only to be convinced of the trick that had been played me—a trick so utterly purposeless that I felt too puzzled to guess at its object, and tried the handle once more, then knocked sharply, then called twice, thrice. No answer. I went to the window. The shutter-bar was firmly fixed, either by rust or some spring that I could not discover. Then I went to the folding-doors, to apply, however unwillingly, for assistance to the tenant of the next room.

Their key, at least, was on the right side. I turned it and flung the door open. A spacious dining-room was before me, in which the afternoon sun shone over the shutter-tops. A fire was burning in the grate, there was a delicate scent of tobacco in the air, and immediately opposite me, sitting on the edge of the table, was a gentleman, cigar in mouth, newspaper in hand. A bulky figure in smart Sunday raiment, his tall hat and yellow tan gloves on the table beside him, and over the back of the chair near him a fur-trimmed overcoat.

He dropped the paper and looked at me for a moment, slipped off his seat, laid his cigar down on the mantelpiece, and advanced with outstretched hand.

"I cannot be mistaken. I heard you

were expected here. Welcome home, Mrs. Vernon!"

I stopped short, shocked, breathless, my ideas numb, the words frozen on my lips. I kept my hands tight-clasped inside my muff, and took no notice of his greeting, trying with all my might to collect my shaken senses, while the stranger stood before me politely waiting my pleasure.

He was the sort of man that other men would cordially dislike, and some women admire. Tall and florid, with glossy black hair, a hook nose, and long, dark, liquid eyes. His moustache did not serve to conceal entirely the thickness of his over-red lips, which wreathed themselves into a smile as I looked him over and over.

I did not find myself trembling or disposed to hysterics. That was not my way; the training of those long years of self-repression was against it, the old trick of outward composure remained to me, and my voice was steady when I asked:

"Where is the woman who brought me here—Martha Pexton?"

"Gone, more than ten minutes ago," he replied, still smiling. "At least, I fancied I heard her drive away."

"And where is her stepmother, Mrs. Pexton?"

"Gone too, but gone where we cannot follow her," he said with a touch of mock solemnity in his deep, musical voice, lifting one sleek white hand and his eyes ceiling-wards. "Mrs. Pexton—or Fanny Burridge—died two months ago. There is nobody in this house at present but myself and you."

"And who are you?" I demanded, getting thoroughly aroused and angry.

"I beg your pardon; I forgot that I ought to have introduced myself at once. I am your husband's friend, Sir Claude Levison."

CHAPTER XIV.

"LEVISON!" I recalled Colonel Fortescue's voice as he pronounced the name. "And he holds Vernon in his power, and Vernon holds Muriel." I was face to face with Muriel's enemy. Oh, tenfold need had I of whatever wit and courage I possessed that she should come to no harm through me! Might I—could I even aid her? I did not know how, but I dismissed for the moment the idea of declaring my own name and insisting on being allowed to leave the house forthwith. I was not afraid on my own account, I discovered

with some surprise. So I merely bowed a cold acknowledgement of the introduction and demanded, "Why have I been entrapped into coming here?"

"Not entrapped—don't call it entrapped," he pleaded; "let us say induced. You have been induced to return to your own house just for a few hours by an innocent little stratagem. I am responsible for that, I confess. Give me leave to explain, and I don't despair of being forgiven."

He looked at me persuasively, and drew up a chair to the fireside, and then another for himself, glanced at his cigar, but looked away again, and then turned his heavy-lidded dark eyes on me and studied me attentively but not offensively for a few seconds. When he spoke at last it was with a subtle change of tone, as if he were addressing another person.

"I caused you to come here, Mrs. Vernon—under false pretences if you like—for the purpose of effecting a reconciliation between you and your husband. I am acting for the good of both. It is the only course to pursue since you have seen fit to come to England. I would have given you some time longer in the hope that you would make the first advances, but when I find you in constant communication with Fortescue, who is avowedly unfriendly to me, and receiving surreptitious visits from your daughter and her lover, I am obliged to interfere for my own protection. I don't apologise for telling you that as your name has been before the public once, the public—which has a short memory for facts and never discriminates—will always be ready to believe the worst of you. You ought to be doubly careful, if not for your own, for Muriel's sake."

That appeal again, and from his lips, stung me into speech, despite my best resolutions.

"Muriel! What is Muriel to you?"

"Muriel is my future wife," he said, in a tone of quiet security.

I pressed my lips close and dropped my eyes that no word or look of the horror that filled me should escape. He misunderstood my silence.

"For her sake and likewise for my own," he continued, drawing his chair closer and keeping his eyes firmly fixed on mine as if he hoped to subdue my will by some mesmeric influence. "You seem a cleverer woman and more reasonable than I was led to expect, Mrs. Vernon. Let us consider the situation calmly and fairly. I assume, of course, that you are a devoted

mother," with a faint sneer; "well, here is your daughter, on the threshold of life, hampered at the outset by two such parents as Vernon and yourself. Vernon has been going steadily downhill ever since you left him, and your life abroad has not been exactly calculated to do credit to a daughter. Now, I say, make a fresh start. Vernon is not the man I should recommend to a young girl to marry, but as you are already his wife, why not make a few sacrifices for the sake of your child? You need not see more of one another than you choose; you hold the purse-strings and can make what conditions you please. You are well off, and the best use you can make of your money is to set him on his legs once more. It won't be for long; no constitution could stand the pace he has been living at; but you can keep up a decent appearance before the world, at least until Muriel is married to me and has made her footing good in society."

"Muriel will never marry you—never!"

He waved a deprecating hand at the interruption, but I could see my feeble dart had pierced his self-complacency.

"Does she say so?" he asked almost wistfully, then smiling once more—he could not help his smiles-being repulsive, I suppose, but they made me shudder. "Ah, you are thinking of her engagement! Pooh!" with an airy wave of his fingers.

"Gordon goes off in a few days for three years—so he thinks, but I am much mistaken if he sees England again in double that length of time. You need not look at me with abhorrence, it is no doing of mine. I've no influence with the authorities, Admiral Gordon will manage it. Bertie Gordon is young—very young. He will be constant, I dare say—in fact, I am sure he will—while he is at sea. I shall do nothing to roughen the course of true love; I am not the villain of a novel, and would not drag a reluctant bride to the altar on any consideration. I let my two good allies, time and distance, work for me, and wait patiently till the young folk of their own accord agree to part. There will come a month or two of drooping, and life-weariness, and decent mourning over a dead and buried love, and then—my opportunity."

I listened, disgusted but fascinated. Repulsive as he was, there was power in the man. He was promising nothing that he did not feel it within his compass to perform.

"What would you have?" he went on impetuously. "You would keep her pining and paling, fretting for a lover who will not come back to her—or if he does, is a very different lover from the one she parted with. You would rather have her left to nobody's care, an overgrown school-girl moping over her disappointment than my wife, with everything love and money can give her. She isn't a beauty now, I know," he went on, warming with his subject; "but see her in a year or two, prosperous, well-dressed. Lady Levison in her Court dress and diamonds; Lady Levison on the box-seat of my four-in-hand; Lady Levison entertaining Royalty in the handsomest house in London. I can get it all for her and I will. She shall be first, amongst the very best people, too. And it shan't be all show and gaiety. I'd despise a woman who cared for nothing better. Whatever line she chooses to take—art, philanthropy, politics—the last for choice—I can help her in it better than any other man I know. I've my eye on a place in the country, or we'll take Llantwyth off your hands if you like, and she shall have her schools, and almshouses, and cottagers to play the Lady Bountiful amongst, in the real country lady style. I shall go into Parliament soon; Baron Levison, perhaps, one of these days, or Baron Llantwyth—that's better. What do you think of that?"

It was Muriel he wanted—Muriel and not her money. He was the more dangerous. My silence irritated him.

"Have you nothing to say? Won't you favour me with your own views on the question? Do you wish her to share Tom Vernon's bachelor ménage, or have you some idea of taking her away yourself? Forgive me for hinting that if Admiral Gordon already objects to Muriel as a daughter-in-law on account of her relationship to you, his objections would hardly be removed by her residence abroad amongst the extremely questionable set of friends you have gathered round you."

"Excuse me, you know nothing whatever about my life up to the time of that railway accident."

"I know the Maddisons, husband and wife, fleeced you remorselessly, and the handsome young German—what's his name? Scherer—involved you in an awkward correspondence, and then would have blackmailed you if Mademoiselle Simon had not brought the police down on him; and then

there was the shady English clergyman, as he described himself—I think I need not go on, though I could give you the chronicles of many a year past. Why, it was my doing that those two last letters were forwarded to you. I meant them to bring you home."

"And Miss Pexton was your agent, and that confession of her stepmother's perhaps your composition?"

"No, no! Genuine that, every word of it. The woman died some weeks after she wrote it, and her admirable daughter at once tried whether she could make a deal with Vernon. He sent her on to me, and I got Vernon to put her in here as caretaker. I had a notion that it might come in useful to be able to lay my hand on her when wanted. I saw her on Saturday evening and gave her her orders. She insisted on being allowed to make her own bargain first with you. Did you give her much for that paper? She was sharp enough to keep Mrs. Pexton's death quiet for the purposes of trade, I suppose. How did she fetch you here?"

I did not notice the question but rose from my chair.

"I have heard you out, Sir Claude; I think I had a right to do so, as I am Muriel Vernon's most faithful and devoted friend, but not the poor lady you mistake me for. Mrs. Vernon is dead. I can prove it. I will tell you some other time by what accident we came to change places and the real Mrs. Vernon to be buried under my name of Elizabeth Margison. Don't you believe me? Don't you wish to believe me?"

He looked deeply concerned, even alarmed.

"Ah, that is what you used to tell them at the hospital, was it not? But you have known better since you came out! Can you not remember your husband?"

"I deny that he is my husband."

"Well, Muriel, then—your daughter. You recognised her."

"I deny that she is my daughter."

He gave a low whistle of dismay, and stood before the fire looking frowningly at me and fingering his moustache with a thoroughly perplexed air. Then he slowly and thoughtfully put himself into his big fur-trimmed coat.

"You are still ill," he said quite gently; "you will be better at home. I will take you there if you will allow me."

I didn't feel ill, I was too excited. But I gladly accepted his offer with an inward laugh to myself at Kitty's probable feelings could she see me returning under the escort of "the man in the coat."

A key clicked in the door outside. Sir Claude started.

"Wait a moment," he begged, and hurried out to meet the new-comer, closing the door after him.

I heard two men's voices outside in debate, but the words were inaudible. At last one, a strange one, raised angrily, came to me distinctly.

"Thank you, I'll make your excuses to my wife. I don't think we want the assistance of any third person to come to an understanding. Ta-ta!"

"Stay where you are!" Sir Claude's deep voice commanded. The door opened and he looked in upon me. "Your husband—I mean Mr. Vernon—is here. Do you wish to see him or not? If you don't feel equal to it, he can wait till another time."

I had no wish to avoid the meeting. Mr. Vernon was a witness on my side. "I will see him at once, if you please."

"Very good."

But instead of admitting Mr. Vernon he withdrew himself. I heard a few undistinguishable words exchanged outside, then the heavy bang of the street door, and I realised with some dismay that I was left, unsupported, to an interview with Mr. Tom Vernon.

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MISS LATIMER OF BRYANS.

By ELEANOR C. PRICE.

Author of "Alexia," "Red Towers," "The Little One," etc.

CHAPTER XVII. PARIS.

AFTER his sermon the Rector went to sleep. He had no intention of doing so, having in his mind many more arguments to bring forward, and stronger words to use; but nature was too much for him. A cold and quiet dawn, cloudy and misty, was looking in at the windows when he opened his eyes again. His companion had moved to the other end of the carriage, and was sitting upright, staring into the pale grey world outside.

Neither of these two men had ever felt so keenly the truth of the ancient saying: "Colours seen by candle-light will not bear the light of day." It would now have been quite impossible to the Rector to begin his unfinished discourse again, or to say anything that was not thoroughly commonplace. For a person of his amiable disposition, he felt cross; he was tired, uncomfortable, cold, and bored with the whole thing. He asked himself why, in the name of all that was Quixotic and ridiculous, he had troubled himself about the business at all. As for this mad journey to Paris, it seemed now the proceeding of a baby rather than of a reasonable man. He felt a creeping sensation of shame and discomfort, at the thought of all the high-flown language, the childish and obvious arguments to which he had given utterance so glibly an hour or two before. He heartily wished himself at home, and described Geoffrey in his own thoughts as an obstinate mule.

He concluded that girls were extremely foolish, and that Porphyria, not the most prudent of her sex—Fanny had often complained of her romantic tendencies—had probably said or done something which the unfortunate man might easily misunderstand. Perhaps it would have been wiser, after all, to let them arrange their own affairs. Then came an additional shiver with the thought of the revolver. Mr. Cantillon, with an impatient twist, turned himself to look at Geoffrey. The young man immediately looked round at him.

"Are you cold?" he said. "Your rug has tumbled off."

He stepped across the carriage and picked up the travelling rug which Mr. Cantillon's housekeeper had hastily flung into Miss Thorne's dog-cart, with little foreknowledge, indeed, of a night journey to Paris.

"Thanks. Never mind; don't trouble yourself," said the Rector a little impatiently.

Geoffrey gave him a quick glance as he arranged the rug. Though the daylight was still faint, and his eyes were dim with sleeplessness, he saw that his new friend's face was changed; the enthusiasm, the ready kindness, which made even hard words easy to bear, seemed to have passed from it with the day and night which were now ended.

And yet those looks and words had done their work. All through the Rector's uneasy sleep, his sermon had been repeating itself in Geoffrey's ears. While pale grey slowly took the place of dark, a long fight had been going on in his mind.

He was ashamed of all he had said to Mr. Cantillon. It would have been better, he now thought, to have confessed nothing, to have gone straight on his way without

telling his feelings and his object to any one. He thought so all the more, as he knew that every word Mr. Cantillon said was right and true. But at the same time it was a counsel of perfection. Why should he forget himself, renounce any barest chance of touching Poppy's heart that might remain to him? Why should he be generous? No one had been generous to him. And yet, while all this argument went on, Mr. Cantillon had unconsciously gained the victory.

In that dismal dawn Geoffrey was beginning to know that he had consented to lay down his hopes and ambitions for ever. He knew that there was nothing left to live for—nothing. He knew that life itself, so lately full of beauty and hope and fire, with his love and his art both calling him on, was now a grey plain stretching to the horizon, over which a lonely man must walk objectless for all the miles and years that lay beyond him. He did not tell himself, however, in so many words, that he would not attempt to see her or to claim her pity.

"Anyhow," he thought, "I'll go on to Herzheim. I can't go back now. When I get there, I shall see whether I can give it up. Why should I, after all?"

He had doubted for a moment whether he might as well do as Mr. Cantillon suggested—stay with him in Paris till evening. His manner about the rug, coming at so depressing a moment, was almost decisive against this.

"He doesn't really want me," thought Geoffrey. "None of them think me good enough for them. Well, I won't trouble them. Besides, I can't stand his talking about that any more."

He went back to his place by the farther window. Mr. Cantillon sat watching him for some minutes, while the kindness of yesterday, like an intermittent spring, began to rise again in his heart. The unpleasant feelings of waking from uncomfortable sleep in a railway carriage were gradually passing away. Yet when he spoke at last, his voice and words were not quite natural or quite like himself.

"Well, Mr. Thorne, do you feel inclined to shoot yourself this morning?"

"I beg your pardon," said Geoffrey, "but did I say anything about shooting myself?"

His quiet coolness amused Mr. Cantillon. "If I were to ask him to empty his pockets now!" he thought.

"No," he said, "you did not. But it is

a very natural wish when you wake up under circumstances like these. Five minutes ago if I had asked you to lend me a revolver I should have felt myself excusable."

"I should have been glad to say I had not one to lend you," said Geoffrey, smiling.

The Rector stared and frowned. Not untruthful, Geoffrey Thorne? surely not untruthful! In that case, you must be given up indeed.

He could say nothing, but stroked his face thoughtfully.

"I don't know anything more uncomfortable than the morning after a night journey. There is a sort of reaction more horrid than any other sensation I know. We are nearing Paris, I suppose?"

"I think so," said Geoffrey.

He was not inclined to talk, and something in his friend's manner deepened his sadness.

Very few more words passed between the travellers before Paris was reached. The mysterious barriers that had risen between them puzzled and saddened them both—Mr. Cantillon, perhaps, most of the two. As he walked with Geoffrey, who did not seem at all inclined to desert him, out of the Gare du Nord, he looked up and said rather sharply:

"Well, do we part here?"

"That can be as you wish," said Geoffrey quietly. "I'll stay with you, if I am of any use. To-night, I may as well go back to England."

"What?"

"To-night I may as well go back to England," repeated Geoffrey with a faint smile.

"Do you mean that? Have you given up your plan?"

"Well, I suppose you would not have said all you did say, unless it had been true. I've been thinking it over, and I will not go back to Switzerland. What I shall do is this. I shall go home, pack up, start off as soon as possible for a winter in Spain. Perhaps I may try to sell a few drawings in London first. You think I am right, don't you? Of course one thing is clear. If she is not to know, I cannot see her again, at least, for years. Of course I shall be utterly wretched; but that doesn't matter, I suppose. When I am told I shall only spoil her happiness, what am I to say or do? Mr. Cantillon, you wouldn't think better of me if I were to shoot myself, as you suggested this morning? That wouldn't

strike you as manly, would it? If it would, I don't mind. I'm quite at your service."

"It would be an act of supreme cowardice," said the Rector. "My dear Thorne, my dear fellow, I trust you, I love you; but give me that revolver!"

He held out his hand half in command, half in entreaty. They stood just outside the station, opposite the cabs, surrounded by noise and clatter of all kinds, but almost too much interested in their own affairs to notice anything.

"What revolver? I have none," said Geoffrey, fixing his dark eyes full on the Rector's agitated face.

"Yes, yes, surely. Don't conceal it. Why should you? My dear fellow, don't you see that I am your friend? I don't accuse you; I don't for a moment think you would; but it is an hourly temptation. Just let it travel in my pocket instead of yours; at least, if it is not loaded."

Geoffrey began to laugh.

"My dear sir, it does not exist. I have no revolver. If I decided on that end to my troubles I should have to buy one."

Mr. Cantillon stared; but it was impossible to doubt that Geoffrey spoke the truth.

"Let us take a cab at once. Dear me, what an extraordinary thing! A great deal of it, then, was on false pretences. What can she have meant? No wonder the desperation was less than I expected. Well, I am thankful, very thankful; though if ever there was a woman who seemed unlikely to exaggerate, that woman was—I beg your pardon, Thorne. I was labouring under a mistake. Now come along. Do you object to the 'Hôtel des Deux Mondes'? We will go there if they can take us in."

At first it was certain that the Rector felt himself ill-used by the collapse of his chief fear about Geoffrey. But a mind like his, easily amused and occupied, was very soon distracted from this little vexation by the life and charm of the Paris streets. And after all, he had gained his end; his conquest and victory were complete. That sermon of his, of which in the grey morning hours he had repented, was really the most effective sermon he had ever preached. It had gone straight to the heart of the solitary hearer, had knocked down his defences, had captured him and freed him at the same time, though not without struggles. The birds of the air—evil spirits fluttering—had been quite ready to carry the seed away in their beaks; but

the ground on which it fell was so good that it sprang up and bore fruit under the very shadow of their hovering wings. Was Geoffrey seeking her pleasure and happiness or his own? That question touched the very deepest chords of his nature, and the moral he drew from it, repeating it as life went on, might lead him to ends beyond the thought of the preacher.

His present anxiety laid to rest, Mr. Cantillon was inclined for the remainder of the day to avoid the subject. His heart was full of pity and kindness for the young fellow, whose sad eyes and downcast look told plainly enough that this sacrifice of his first plan, and the hope of seeing Poppy again, was anything but a consolation under the blow that had fallen upon him. But it seemed clear that further discussion would be of no use, and might only stir up feelings that might gradually fall asleep if locked in silence. Paris was certainly a good place for distraction.

When the Rector had rested himself thoroughly, he set off with Geoffrey to visit his oculist. It was impossible, however, to see him that day. An appointment was made for the next afternoon. Mr. Cantillon walked very thoughtfully down the quiet street; he was half inclined to throw up this affair of the oculist, which had been little more than a makeshift, an excuse to hide the real motive for his journey. He was really nervous; yet he did not quite feel that he could tell his friend Thorne the whole truth about it. Geoffrey saw that he was disturbed, and half understood the reason.

"About your eyes," he said abruptly. "If you don't care to be left alone, I could stay till to-morrow evening—if you would like it."

Mr. Cantillon looked up with that sudden brightening which was one of the chief attractions of his face.

"You are too good—I should like it indeed. But—stay over to-morrow night, and we can travel back to Bryans together."

"All right," said Geoffrey.

Mr. Cantillon next visited a telegraph office, and from there despatched two messages: one to his housekeeper, the other to Miss Lucy Thorne. This last was laconic: "Changed his mind—coming back with me."

"And now," he said, "as to the sights of Paris. You know the Louvre, of course. But suppose we go there now and look at some Spanish pictures. When I was a

young man, I used to admire Spanish art beyond everything. Do you know, I think your plan of a winter in Spain is capital. I wish I could go with you."

"I wish you would," said Geoffrey cordially.

They spent two or three hours at the Louvre; and the next morning, when Mr. Cantillon asked him what he would like to do, Geoffrey could find nothing better to suggest than another visit there.

"By all means," said his friend good-humouredly. "One has not often the chance of going there with an artist."

After two hours there, they came out towards the middle of the day, and were just walking under the arch that leads from the Place du Carrousel into the Rue de Rivoli, when Mr. Cantillon felt himself violently and unconsciously pushed by his companion. He nearly stumbled and fell into the road, where a carriage was just passing. Recovering himself, in extreme surprise, and stepping forward to the street, he was aware of a confusion that he could not at first understand. Carts and carriages were pulled up suddenly, horses were plunging, there was a great noise of shouting and cracking of whips. A man with a lady in his arms, white as death, her head on his shoulder, seemed to rise up suddenly out of a crowd of trampling feet and sliding wheels. His hat was gone, he was covered with mud from the freshly watered street, and her dark dress also was splashed and stained and wet from her head to her feet. The plain little bonnet she wore had fallen back, and the sun shone on her beautiful bright hair till she was lifted into the shadow of the archway.

Before Mr. Cantillon had regained his wits, or recognised anybody, he felt himself seized by the arm.

"Henry! Henry! It's you. How wonderful! Oh, look at Poppy! She has been knocked down by a dreadful cart. Oh, what shall I do? Some gentleman—good gracious, Mr. Thorne! Poppy, Poppy, look up! Are you hurt, dearest? Henry, for goodness sake, run after Mrs. Nugent and Arthur. We left them just now—they went that way."

Mr. Cantillon grasped Miss Fanny Latimer's hands at first in silence.

"Good heavens! Dear, dear me! What is to be done?" were the very senseless words that rose to his lips at this most confusing moment.

He did not, however, do as she asked

him. He advanced a few steps, peered across the road, saw nothing of Mrs. Nugent and Arthur, turned hastily back again to where Geoffrey, as pale as the girl he held, his eyes burning, was still supporting her and trying to regain his breath, which came in quick gasps. A little crowd was already gathered, and Mr. Cantillon's wits returned with the necessity of some sort of action. Fanny Latimer, sobbing and distracted, again caught hold of his arm.

"Is she hurt?" he said to Geoffrey.

"I think not," the young man answered, but he could scarcely speak. "I think she has only fainted. Get a fiacre. Take her to a chemist's shop."

His voice at her ear seemed to rouse Poppy. She opened her eyes, lifted her head, gazed up first, with a sort of waking wonder, into the eyes that hardly dared, near as they were, to answer her look. Leaning against the wall, Geoffrey had hardly been able to keep her on her feet. Now she stood up with a sudden effort, murmuring, "Aunt Fanny. What has happened? I'm better now."

"My darling! Your bonnet," cried Aunt Fanny.

"My head matters more. What was it? Something struck me. I thought I was killed. I fainted, I suppose. Did I scream? You saved my life."

She looked up again at Geoffrey, whose arm was still supporting her, and the change in her voice was only too enchanting.

It was on his lips to say, "I wish I had given mine for it," but he only murmured something, and then looked imploringly at the face of a friendly, helpful Englishman, who had paused close to the little group.

"Have the goodness to call a fiacre, won't you?" he said.

In two minutes the whole thing was over. It seemed afterwards that Poppy, following her aunt across the street, had lingered a moment and looked back towards the tall figures of Arthur Nugent and his mother, just disappearing round the nearest corner. That look had very nearly cost her her life. She was knocked down by a great, fiery chestnut, which a young man was driving in a high dog-cart as fast as the Paris streets would let him. There was a general pulling up and shouting. The horse was violently backed just in time to prevent his trampling on Poppy as she lay. She was struggling to her feet when Geoffrey rushed from the pavement, flinging himself recklessly among the wheels

and horses' feet. As he lifted her she fainted, and he carried her across the road in breathless terror, but yet did not think she was hurt, for he had seen the accident from the beginning.

The Rector, of course, drove off with his friends to their hotel, and Geoffrey was left hatless and bewildered at the Arch of the Carrousel. There was nothing for it but to drive back himself to the "Deux Mondes." Late in the afternoon, when he had been dried and brushed, and had bought a new hat, and had lingered and waited about for news till he could bear it no longer, he ventured to the other hotel in the Place Vendôme to enquire for Miss Latimer. As he passed its windows, he was sure that he heard her voice. Walking quietly in, instinct guided him to the door of the reading-room, which he pushed open gently.

It was a large room, and there were only three people in it. Near the fireplace, Miss Fanny Latimer and Mr. Cantillon sat in earnest conversation. At the other end, a long way from them, Porphyria was lying back in a large, green velvet arm-chair. She had a book in her hand, but was not reading. Her face was very pale, and when Geoffrey first looked in her eyes were closed. She opened them instantly, however, and with a slight start. Then she smiled quietly, looking pleased, and made a sign to him to come to her. He came very gently across the room, looking at her with wistful eyes; it seemed to him that she had never been so lovely. And indeed she had not. Poppy had learnt something since he saw her last. The soft brilliancy of happy love was shining about her; a slight touch of consciousness deepened her smile, and added to the expressive beauty of her eyes.

A wave of reverent shyness swept over Geoffrey. He scarcely touched her hand, but gravely took the chair she pointed out to him, and asked her rather hoarsely if she was better. He was aware that she said kind things, thanked him, praised him, said everything that he did not want to hear. She spoke, and he answered her in low tones, which did not reach the distant couple by the fireplace, quite happy with each other. Both looked round and smiled when Geoffrey came in, and for a moment the Rector's face was crossed by a shade of anxiety. But only for a moment.

Of course Geoffrey was asked what brought him to Paris. She had already,

it was evident, been questioning Mr. Cantillon, and had heard of the meeting at Charing Cross.

"And he tells me something about Spain," said Poppy. "You are not really going to Spain?"

"Why shouldn't I?" he murmured, looking at the carpet.

"But why should you? Isn't it a pity to be so restless? Would not they like to have you at home for a little? And my picture?"

"I have begun your picture."

"But won't you finish it? Don't you find the subject an attractive one? I hoped you would admire my friend."

"She is very pretty."

His answer, however, was cold, and she looked a little puzzled, a little sad, as her eyes rested on the face so obstinately bent down.

"What makes you want to go to Spain?" she said, very low. "Why will you banish yourself? Why not stay in England and be happy?" He thought she was too cruel, and he answered nothing. "We are very old friends, and I want something from you," she went on, a faint colour coming into her face. "I am very happy now, you know, and I want your good wishes."

He could not look up, but answered patiently: "I must be glad of anything that makes you happy."

"Thank you—that is very kind," she said. "We shall be better friends than ever now—and you will let us help you in any way we can. You saved my life to-day, you know; you might have been hurt yourself, and so——"

Geoffrey looked up and smiled. Somehow, for some mysterious reason, that "us," that "we," gave him suddenly new strength.

"Hurt!" he said. "Oh, I would have given more in exchange than a bruise."

Poppy's eyes at that moment were anxious. She was not clever, and she was not willing to admit the existence of things beyond her rather narrow philosophy. And she had known poor Geoffrey Thorne so long—and, to conclude, there were things that really could not happen. She had her theories of friendship as well as of her own personal duty as lady and mistress of Bryans. He was a good young man, with a great deal of talent and sense, and, now that she was herself engaged, she saw more clearly than ever that a marriage between him and Maggie would be a really

charming arrangement, and must be carried out if possible. She therefore would not allow herself to fancy any absurdities from anything he might say. Her head ached, too, and she was still suffering from the shock of the morning. She wondered a little how long he would sit there.

Then the door opened, bringing light and colour to her face, and driving any attempt at them from Geoffrey's. He stood up rather stiffly as Arthur Nugent, smiling and saying, "How do you feel now?" came across the room.

"Much better," smiled Poppy in answer.

How could she look like that? Geoffrey's eyes were drawn in spite of himself to her face, and lingered there in such absorbed, painful admiration, that he did not notice Captain Nugent's outstretched hand or hear him saying, "Mr. Thorne, I am most awfully obliged to you."

Then the group round Poppy's chair was increased by Mr. Cantillon and Miss Fanny Latimer, both beaming with happiness.

"Dear Poppy, the Rector is so tiresome," cried her aunt. "He won't stay to help us with our shopping and take us home. He does nothing but talk about the parish. He says that Mr. Thorne is going back with him to-morrow."

There seemed to be a whole outburst of talk and cheerful argument. Geoffrey did not hear much. He stood, feeling like a spectre at the feast, till Mr. Cantillon's friendly hand was laid on his arm.

"Now, Thorne, my dear fellow, we had better be off."

"I am ready," said Geoffrey.

He turned to say good-bye to Poppy. Her eyes had never been quite so kind, her white, slim fingers had never felt quite so soft in a hand that almost shrank away from them, her power over his life and hopeless love had never been quite so supreme, as at that moment in the Paris hotel, with Arthur Nugent standing by and looking contentedly on.

"Don't go to Spain," she said, with her parting smile.

"I will do as you like," Geoffrey answered.

Mr. Cantillon heard the words, and his mind was filled with disapproving reflections. But he said nothing to Geoffrey, who continued to behave with a quiet and manly cheerfulness. They returned together from Paris the next day, in time for Sunday services, without a word of

allusion to the subject that had taken them there. And the appointment with the oculist was forgotten.

SENSATIONAL LITERATURE.

"THOSE whose taste is not ruined by the current craze for sensational literature," I came across that sentence the other day in a "literary" organ. It was not a strange sentence to come across. It was a sentence which, in some form or other, like poverty, is always with us. And before asking the question which I intend to ask a little further on, I should like to note that some people's taste must take a good time ruining. If, that is, sensational literature really and truly does tend to ruin the national taste, how many years ago is it since that article must have been dead and buried? Because, if you look into the matter, you will find that ever since there has been any literature, there has been sensational literature. I fancy that if the ladies and gentlemen who regard, or who affect to regard, "the current craze for sensational literature," with a judicious mixture of scorn, disgust, and terror, were told that their taste must be ruined because their great great grandmothers greedily devoured the novels of Mrs. Aphra Behn, and because their grandmothers delighted in the horrors of Mrs. Radcliffe, not to speak of works which, if they were published nowadays—ye gods and little fishes! think of some of the scenes in "Roderick Random" and "Peregrine Pickle"! where are the "episodes" of MM. Zola and Belot compared to some of those!—would inevitably be placed upon the Index Expurgatorius of the Society for the Suppression of Vice—I fancy that if those ladies and gentlemen were told this, there would be something of a pother. You have only to glance at the publications of the eighteenth century to perceive that sensational literature flourished then to the full as much as ever it does now. Has the national taste—the taste of the common people, the people who are our masters, and who supply us writers with our daily bread—taken more than a century to ruin? Does it show any unmistakeable signs of imminent decay? Granting that sensational literature does destroy the national taste, what a singularly vigorous constitution the national taste must have!

The question which, in this connection,

I wish to put, is this. It is quite a simple question. It is a question to which anybody, and everybody, ought to be able to provide an answer. What is "sensational literature"? There's my question. I suppose if a School Board inspector were to put that question to a class of "sixth standard" pupils, more than fifty per cent. of the members of the class would be able to supply him with an answer. Lucky sixth standard! Fortunate "cocksureness" of the young! For my part I don't even know where to begin to look for an answer. I do not know a man to whom I can apply. I do not know one single book in which I can search with any reasonable hope of obtaining satisfaction. I turn to the dictionary which lies nearest to my hand, and I find that "sensational" means, "due to sensation or sense perception; producing a sensation or an excited interest." "Sensational" can hardly be joined to the word "literature" in such a sense as this. "Sensational literature" can scarcely merely be that part of literature in which one takes an excited interest. Think of the multitude of men who have taken an "excited interest" in "Paradise Lost," in the works of Shakespeare, even in the works of Locke and of Bacon. No one ever took such "excited interest," say, in stories of murders, bigamies, robberies, as has been taken in the works of such men as those.

In such matters one can, perhaps, best speak from one's own experience. Some little time ago I was asked if I cared for "King Solomon's Mines" and "She." A feminine relative who was present interpolated a remark to the effect that she hoped I did not care for such "sensational things" as those. As it happens, I do care for both those works. Fortunately I had the courage to say so. It is not long since a clerical friend was tumbling over the contents of a certain bookshelf of mine. He had in his hands "Le Crime et le Châtiment" and "L'Homme à l'Oreille Cassée." He was good enough to allow that both stories were to a certain extent amusing; but, he added, "a pity they're so sensational." For my part, I could not see where the "pity" quite came in. He tumbled over more books. "More sensational literature," he observed. I perceived that he was glancing at M. Renan's "La Vie de Jésus Christ." I flattered myself that I grasped his point of view. To him, "sensational literature" was that literature which interfered, or endeavoured to inter-

fere, with his preconceived ideas. In that sense, to the Pope, "sensational literature" is that literature which is inscribed on the Index Expurgatorius—such works as Newton's "Principia" and the "Kritik of Pure Reason," and similar light literature. That is an interpretation of the phrase which I find myself able to understand. But when, the other day, I heard a man in a railway carriage declare—a man who interlarded his conversation with oaths, mild oaths, but still they were oaths—that Captain Marryat's novels were too "sensational" for him, I confess that I was silent with the silence of amazement. In what sense he used the word "sensational" I did not, and still cannot perceive.

Enquire into the sense in which all the people of your acquaintance do use the word. Listen to their application of it. You will find that a number of persons, when they speak of "sensational literature," are applying that phrase to novels. "The current craze for sensational literature," and "the current craze for fiction," are, to them, interchangeable terms. You would imagine, to hear them talk, that they lumped all novels together, and that fiction must, of necessity, be sensational. But if you put one of these persons, as the Americans say, "on the stand," and begin to ply him with certain leading questions, you will, in course of time, begin to gather that, in so imagining, you were after all in error. He—supposing the person to be a man—will tell you there is such a thing as "good" and such a thing as "bad" fiction. He will, not improbably, go on to add that good fiction is that which contains a "good moral"—a good moral, that is, as a matter of course, from his point of view, and not necessarily from Brown's. He may even go on to add that bad fiction is that which does not contain a "good moral," or, indeed, a moral of any kind. But when you go on to ask him if bad fiction, as thus defined, is necessarily sensational fiction, I am inclined to think that that gentleman will hesitate before he answers. If he is a wise man, before he answers distinctly, "yes," he will hesitate a good long time.

A person of the class we are alluding to once told me that sensational fiction was that fiction which presented an untrue picture of the realities of life. I felt that I had him there; and I did have him on the hip. I dragged out a heap of "goody stories," "moral tales," and so on, which had been issued by the religious societies and by the so-called religious publishers,

and I asked him to go through that heap and point out the works which might fairly be said to present a true picture of the realities of life. He was an honest man, and he declined. Possibly he felt in his heart, when he came to think of it, that, if sensational fiction is fiction which presents an untrue picture of the realities of life, then, in that branch of literature, "goody books" bear away the palm.

I have heard it asserted, and I have seen it written, that sensational novels are those novels which treat of crime. But this, on the face of it, is obviously absurd. He would be a bold man—being, in the legal sense, sane—who called "Adam Bede" a sensational novel. Yet does not "Adam Bede" depend for its very life upon the treatment of what the world calls crime? What is probably meant is, that a sensational novel is a novel which treats of crime in a particular way. Just so. But in what way? A friend, whose judgement I esteem, when I put this question to him, answered, "Why, in the way in which Fortuné du Boisgobey treated it in France and Mrs. Henry Wood in England." This conjunction of names a trifle staggered me. Mrs. Wood wrote some good stories—in a style of her own. I wonder who would be prepared to call "The Channings" or "Mrs. Haliburton's Troubles" a sensational novel? "Danesbury House" is, according to the definition quoted above, perhaps a sensational novel, because, in the violent attempt to drag in by the head and ears a so-called "good moral," it presents a preposterously untrue picture of the realities of life. I am confronted with "East Lynne." I will say this for "East Lynne," that it contains one of the best plots which has been constructed for many a day. I only wish that I could construct one as good. And there is this to be said, not only of "East Lynne," but of all the author's works, that Mrs. Henry Wood appears herself to be under the impression that she is teaching a good moral. Not a few of her novels wind up with the quotation of a "text" of Scripture. She seems desirous to convey the impression to the reader that her sole aim has been to preach a sermon founded on, and suggested by, that text. So if good fiction is that which contains a "good moral," how shall we call Mrs. Henry Wood a sensational novelist? As to M. du Boisgobey—to my thinking, in him we have a bird of quite a different feather. He makes no bones about the matter.

"Le Crime de l'Opéra" is to him "Le Crime de l'Opéra." He does not wish to cover it up. On the contrary, he wishes to set it on a hill—to write it large. The crime, and his treatment of the crime, he desires shall appeal to the imaginations, and the tastes, and the pockets of his readers. Here, then, I imagine, we have a typical sensational novel, of a certain class. And "Le Crime de l'Omnibus" is only another "Crime de l'Opéra," and all the rest of his works are ditto ditto. So let us grant, for the sake of illustration, that M. du Boisgobey is a typical sensational novelist—a purveyor, that is, of sensational literature. We have not arrived at the definition yet, but at the thing itself, let us grant that we have arrived.

There is one thing which we must, some of us, admit, that M. du Boisgobey is, on the whole, amusing. For my part, I can forgive a great deal to the man who amuses me. And, unfortunately, there is another thing which we must, some of us, admit, that M. du Boisgobey is long. What a sensational novelist that sensational novelist would have been if he had only "boiled it down"! Of course, the exigencies of the "fenilleton" method of publication precluded any suicidal tendencies of that description.

Does any one seriously mean to assert that any person's taste could be "ruined" by a course of M. du Boisgobey, or even of M. Gaboriau—for let us concede another point, and bracket him. These assertions! It seems to me that it would be reasonable to assert that it is the boat which conveys the current, and not the current which conveys the boat. What is meant by "ruined" in this connection? Does it mean "altered," "changed"? Is it possible that a sane man can exist, who is prepared to stake his reputation, or any portion of it, on the assertion that a person who has a taste, say, for the literature of pure mathematics, or for the "verse" of Mr. Browning, can have his taste altered, changed, by a course of M. du Boisgobey, or of M. Gaboriau, or of fifty thousand MM. du Boisgobey and Gaboriaus? To speak of nothing else, what an ill compliment that man pays to the literature of pure mathematics, or to the "verse" of Mr. Browning! What can that "literary" organ mean when it writes about "those whose taste is not ruined by the current craze for sensational literature"?

The truth is simply this. Those who

like—to give an English illustration—"Called Back" like "Called Back." Those who like "Sordello" like "Sordello." Those who like "Called Back" more than "Sordello" like "Called Back" more than "Sordello"—not because their "taste has been ruined by the current craze for sensational literature," but because they have a natural taste in that direction. You can guide a man's taste; you cannot provide him with a taste with which Nature has omitted to provide him. You can issue "standard" works at "popular" prices; but, until the era of the "New Liberty" dawns upon the world, you cannot force a man to buy them. Still less can you force him, having bought them, to read them. Least of all can you force him, having read them, to like them.

The man who, to-day, only cares for the "Three-fingered Jack" kind of literature may possibly rise to the enjoyment of Mr. George Meredith. The man who, to-day, enjoys Mr. George Meredith can surely never sink to care only for "Three-fingered Jack." Where is the "literary" organ which would dare to assert it? That literary organ can have a very poor opinion of Mr. Meredith.

I am not fond of "converting" men, having doubts as to what it would be advisable to "convert" them to. But I do wonder that those who believe in the high calling and in the influence of literature are so slow in grasping the fact that if you can only get a man to read anything, you have done something—you have induced him, at all events, to take the first step onwards and upwards. Let us hope that the man who begins by spelling out the advertisements will pass on to the police news, thence to the society items, and so on. That man will, unconsciously, be creating within himself the spirit of enquiry, that appetite which grows with eating. The people who, if you are to believe what they say, would like to "wipe out" "sensational literature" might, from their own point of view, as reasonably talk of taking the stepping-stones out of the brook. They would get very few people to cross the stream if they did. Only get a man to like to read anything, and it is quite upon the cards that he will end by liking to read everything.

Apart from this, I mean nothing offensive when I say that it seems to me that those who talk, like that "literary" organ, with uplifted hands and bated breath, of "the

current craze for sensational literature," must have a very limited horizon. I venture to affirm that as much art, skill, and craftsmanship have been shown in the production of sensational literature as in the production of any other kind of literature. Like the poet, the true sensational novelist is born, not made. And even the acknowledged master of his craft will only be able to turn out two or three masterpieces, although his works may be numbered by the score. It is easy to point to that black bogey the "penny dreadful," and to ask if any art is required to turn out that. I really don't know what a "penny dreadful" is. I see it spoken of in the newspapers; but that is all. I wish somebody who is an authority on the subject would send along a bundle of "penny dreadfuls" so that I might understand, once for all, what the term denotes. It is the wildest delusion to suppose that all the penny stories are, in the remotest sense of the word, sensational. I have gone through hundreds of "penny novelettes," picked up in holes and corners in the towns and villages all over England. In only the merest fraction have I ever found even a trace of sensationalism. They are, for the most part, simply colourless, tasteless, invertebrate—all about nothing at all. When there is a story it is always the same story, and what story there is is told with such a lack of life and colour that, for all the world, they might have been written by dolls for dummies. It is a mystery what those who read them see in them to read. It is certainly not "sensation." It is simply a new variation of the old truth that what is one man's meat is another man's poison.

But even conceding that all "penny dreadfuls" are sensational, the concession has nothing to do with the fact that it is one of the most difficult things in the world to write a good sensational story; or, if anything, the concession goes to prove my point. It is, probably, as easy to write a poor sensational story—though I have my doubts upon the subject—as to write any other kind of poor story. An amazing quantity of poor fiction issues from the printing presses. There are no statistics at hand; but, if there were, I should like to hazard a prediction that the larger portion of it could make no sort of claim to the epithet "sensational."

Consider. Who is there shall say that it was an easy thing to write "The Woman in White"?—that it required no art of the craftsman, no skill of the master, no brain

power, nothing of that thing which we call genius? Let that man, be he of the new or of the old school of critics, sit down and give us a fit mate to "The Woman in White," and so prove—we shall want it proved—that the truth is in him. I say, simply, that the true sensational novelist is born, not made. Who will give us another "It's Never Too Late to Mend"? That man will have in him the "makings" of a great writer. Who shall give us an "Uncle Silas"? Was Edgar Allan Poe a sensational writer? Surely! Then would that I were.

It is difficult in setting up Jones not to have a rap at Brown. Yet it is an error; and an error is a thing to be avoided. But when I hear people speak of sensational literature as if it were necessarily a bad thing, I feel impelled to ask, what thing, then, is good? I look down the publishers' lists and through the library catalogues, and I wonder. To my thinking, some of the greatest works which the world has seen have been sensational novels. And I am inclined to believe that, in so thinking, I am on the side of the angels. There was a sensational novel which, once upon a time, made some stir in the world. It has not altogether ceased to make a stir in the world to-day. It was called "Jane Eyre." I wish I had been man, or woman, enough to have written it. A book which made almost, if not quite as great an impression upon me as any English book I ever read was a sensational novel, "Paul Ferrol." Is that a book which any idiot could have written? If so, then would that we all were idiots.

Each man looks out upon the world through eyes of his own. Some men are apt to look upon literature with the same eyes which they use for the world. They like to see the characters and scenes which they see in daily life on the pages of their books: the little trivial incidents; a faithful mirror of the daily round. And why should they not? Jane Austen neither lived nor wrote in vain.

There are writers who can, in this sense, and in this sense only, hold the mirror up to nature. Good writers some of them are—Anthony Trollope was one of them. There are masters in this school alive to-day—very much alive are some of them. So much alive is one of them in America that he is calmly affirming that there is no fiction worth calling fiction except that particular kind of fiction by writing which he makes a living, and in writing which he

happens to excel—that there never has been, and that there never will be. This is very much as though Horace had asserted that there never had been any poetry until he wrote—especially that there had been no poetry in Greece. It seems curious that there should exist, in that great continent, a clever man with so limited an horizon. But it is not a weakness peculiar to any man, or to any set of men, that tendency to think that one's own geese are swans—and not only swans, but the only true swans that ever were.

You will find this, that the man who sneers at a sensational novel could not write a good sensational novel to save his life. That, not impossibly, is one of the reasons why he sneers. It is only the man who has written, or who has it in him to write, a good sensational novel, who realises that the task is one which calls for the exercise of some of the highest powers which a writer can possess. "Alas for the rarity of Christian charity!" Why, in the name of common sense, cannot we take and enjoy all the good the gods provide us? Why call you these things unclean? That, in effect, was the question which was asked in the early days of Christianity. The Scribes and the Pharisees are at it again, they are laying down the law for us; what they do we are to do—they alone know why.

So far as I am concerned I desire to speak with due appreciation of the words which I use. I know of very few things which are, at bottom, unclean; things with which you had better not come in contact; things with which you had better have no dealing; things which will injure, smirch you irretrievably if you do. Some things, too, I like, without being able to say exactly why I like them, or what I like them for. I own it freely. Especially is this the case with books. We are not men of one mood, we are not men of one day, we are not men, even, of one weather; in certain moods we turn to certain books. Of all intangible things is not the most intangible the mood of a man? It comes he knows not how, it goes he knows not why nor whither. Who shall grasp his mood of the hour, and insist upon its staying with him a month, a week, or a day? We like one book to-day, another book to-morrow; not because we like one less and the other more, but because change and variety are the very essence of good living. A specialist may make his mark in his own particular specialty, but if he is nothing but a

specialist he is like a dog chained to his kennel; he knows the world with even wonderful knowledge to the extent of his chain, but of the world beyond he knows nothing—he is dead to the world beyond. Unloose him from his chain, and does not life become to him better worth his living, even though he immediately has trouble with a cat? And, undoubtedly, in particular kinds of weather, it is a necessity that one should have a particular kind of book; to compel uniformity under varying climatic conditions would, on that account alone, entail a grievous hardship. When one has done one's work, and the skies without are unpropitious, and one's heart is in one's boots, and one's nervous energy has all run down, to take up a book and to become absorbed in it, and to forget one's own story in the story of others—shall all the doctors of all the faculties throughout the world prescribe a better prescription than that as a remedy for a mind which is temporarily diseased? And in what book are you so likely to become absorbed as in a good sensational novel? It really seems that it is just because a sensational novel does possess this power of absorption that it is so abused. With amazing unreason, what is its chiefest virtue is actually accounted to it as its chiefest vice.

This recipe for the banishing of a sullen hour some write with a difference. Some tell you that to charm away a fit of depression, whether of mind or of body, there is nothing like a volume of the poets. So be it, I am no dissenter; to each man his own sauce. Few are fonder of a good or a great poem than am I; but one can only speak of what one knows, and I have found that the average poet requires too much concentration, too much serious study, to be of much avail to me in the mood of which I am now writing, and which comes to me, alas! too often. You, take you your poet, I, I will take my sensational novel. Explain to me, so that your explanation shall be plain, why it should be accounted to me as sin, why, on that account, either mentally, morally, or physically, I am less of a man than you. Better let us shake hands and agree that, since men are made of different fashions, it does not follow that these are greater and those are less simply because they differ.

Do not suppose that I hold a brief for the sensational novel as against all other novels. Not a bit of it. I merely wish

to emphasize the fact that a sensational novel is a novel, and as regards all novels which are readable, write me down as one who loves them. Nothing is easier than to brand a person, or a thing, with a nickname. "Sensational literature" is merely a nickname, a catch phrase. Do not let us allow mere catch phrases to take us in. Half the time they mean nothing at all. Often, when they do mean something, it is something which is no credit to the speaker. When you hear a man speak with a sneer of sensational literature, pin him down to accurate definition. Make him say exactly what he means. Compel him to give leading cases. You will find, in all probability, that he is "a oner to wriggle." When you meet the sneer in print, I almost think that you would be justified in murmuring to yourself, "Penny a liner." It is wrong to call a man names because he calls you names; but it is human nature, and you certainly would be able to claim as much justification as the writer of the sneer.

Because good and great work has been done in the department of sensational literature, it is nothing to say that poor and bad work has also been done. You might as well execrate all art because there have been such shocking bad artists. In what department of merely human labour has poor and bad work not been done? For instance, how many bad poets have there been to one good, not to speak of one great one? Relatively, I should say that there have been more bad poets than bad sensational novelists. Do we hold poetry to blame for that?

The man who penned that sentence in that literary organ which has already been quoted was "swearing at large"; writing without pausing to consider; speaking first and thinking—if he thought at all—afterwards. He will probably be the first to admit it when he comes to reflect. In no accurate sense of the word is sensational literature ruining either individual or national taste. It never has played, and it never will play, the part of destroyer. Statements to the contrary are bladders which collapse when pricked with a pin. If sensational literature is on its trial, I should be only too glad to have a chance of holding a brief for the defence. I should very much like to hear the evidence for the other side. When the witnesses have been cross-examined, I fancy you will find there is little evidence remaining. I would undertake, weak

advocate though I am, to bring the defendant out of court without a stain upon his character.

THE FIVE GREY NUNS.

A COMPLETE STORY.

WE were five women in a boat, it was Whitsuntide, the sun smiled upon us, the river was smooth and shining, the meadows were rich with clover and daisies, and we were having a glorious time. Idlers and loungers called us girls, but we were all workers in the world, and all except Dot—the youngest of us—earned our own living; therefore we called ourselves women. We started from Reading one Friday evening after school—for some of us were teachers—we met our three London friends at the boat-house by Caversham Lock, we piled in our hampers and bags, and started. There were five of us. Edith Stacy—our bonny, capable, grey-eyed, peach-cheeked Edie—was, on working days, a grave superior official in the Savings Bank Department of the big London office, where her calculating feats were enough to turn any ordinary woman's brain. Edie, in her white blouse and blue cap, looked as sweet and charming as though figures did not exist. Pompilia Paget, B.A., was a High-School mistress. She was superior and dignified enough when she sat among her girls, teaching mathematics and reading intermediate Greek with her London University students; but Pom in the boat was another being. She was as pale and as pure as Browning's Pompilia, and we all knew that Pom had a heart of gold; but Pom had a roguish glance in her eye, and a dimple in her left cheek, and a head so full of mischief, that one wondered, sometimes, how she found room for all the Latin, Greek, and mathematics. Then there was Lil, our true-hearted, comical Lil, with her caricatures, sketches, mimicry, and artistic instincts, for Miss Lillian Leaver was an artist when she was in London, though on the river she was just our merry-tongued, light-hearted, laughing Lil.

Deborah Diggs was a Board School mistress; she was an enthusiast and a dreamer of dreams was dear old Deb, with her cranks and her crotchets, her Socialism, her politics, her ardent enthusiasm for the woman's suffrage, and her educational theories. She was a

successful mistress, she gloried in her school and her work, and she went on working and visioning her visions of an ideal future, and worshipping her heroes. And lastly came Dot Darling, whose real name was Dorothy. She was our youngest, a slim maid of twenty, with a rosy mouth and demure blue eyes. Dot was a household fairy when she was at home, and she hoped one day to be a nurse.

This was the party. Deb and Pom were sculling, and Edie was steering. The boat had no name, only a number, and as we had to live in it three or four days Deb suggested it should be named.

"Let us call it the 'Red Radical,'" she said.

Pom laughed softly and hissed gently; but Pom was a Tory, and did not understand the big dreams which glowed in Deb's bosom.

"Let it be the 'Doge's Bride,'" murmured Edie, who had just returned from a holiday in Venice.

"We will call it the 'Nunnery,'" declared Lil, with a mischievous glance at Edie, who blushed vividly.

"The 'Grey Nunnery,'" pronounced Pom, with an emphasis on the "Grey," and a roguish glance at Deb, who pulled harder and said nothing, but a deeper look came into her grey eyes.

"Yes, yes, the 'Grey Nunnery,'" declared all.

"But please explain," murmured Dot, with wondering blue eyes, for they were all laughing; "why 'Grey Nunnery'?"

"And we are Grey Nuns," went on Pom, never heeding Dot.

"Grey Nuns!" repeated Deb, pulling harder.

"Why?" asked Dot.

"We will explain this evening," said Lil, who sat in the bow, and she took out her sketching-block and began to draw a fancy sketch of the five Grey Nuns.

It was nearly nine o'clock when the five Grey Nuns passed through Goring Lock and delivered up their boat to the friendly boatman.

"How sweet," said Deb, sniffing, as they trod the Goring roads to their cottage. "Honeyauckle; look."

"Yes," said Edie. "What a treat to be out of London."

"What a charming cottage," declared Lil, when they reached the low, thatched, vine-clad cottage. "Three whole days here, and perhaps four; delightful!"

"And the river in the sunshine,"

murmured Deb. "Life is worth living isn't it, girls?"

"Why are we Grey Nuns?" demanded Dot, as they sat in the low-raftered cottage room, where Edie was cutting lemons for lemon squash, Pom was mixing a salad, and Lil was cutting bread and butter for the evening meal.

Nobody answered, and Dot went on complainingly:

"There is a joke in it, I'm sure."

"Dot," said Deb suddenly, "shall you ever marry?"

"I don't know," said Dot seriously.

"But you ought to know," declared Deb, as she arose. "Sisters," she began, "Sisters of the order of the Grey Nuns, let us take a solemn vow."

Edie, Pom, and Lil stayed their operations, and Deb went on:

"My dears, men are not worth much, not men of the vulgar herd; we can do infinitely better without them. We will take a vow of celibacy here on the spot, but," and her voice grew thrilling, "we have our ideals——"

Lil interrupted.

"Which means, we each worship one man in our hearts, and we have a 'yes' ready for one 'bright particular star.' I know Edie has, and I'm not ashamed to own to it so far as I am concerned," and Lil's face shone, while Edie blushed rosy red.

Pom went on gravely:

"I know Deb reverences one man with her whole soul, and I also worship at the shrine of one whom I consider a saint of earth."

Deb's fine face glowed and her eyes grew soft.

"The man whom I reverence is worthy of all honour," she said; "he is one of the noble souls of earth."

"And you, Dot?" asked Edie.

"I don't think I know any noble souls," mused Dot; "I wish I did. There is our vicar, but he is fat and lazy; besides he is married; and there is the curate, but his face is pimply and he chants out of tune," and Dot shook her head sadly. "He could never make me look like Deb when I thought of him," she added.

"Isn't there anybody else?" queried Lil.

Dot sighed.

"No one," she said.

"She is a novice," said Deb.

"She must be initiated," declared Edie.

When the evening meal was over Lil arose.

"Grey Nuns," she began, "I propose that we each in turn describe our ideal man and say why we worship him."

"I second that," declared Deb.

"And I propose that Deb begins," said Pom.

"We have no secrets from the sisterhood," said Lil. "Let us disclose to them all the wherefore of the 'Grey Nunnery.'"

"They know," said Edie.

"All but Dot," declared Deb.

"And she is a novice," decided Pom.

"She must be initiated," said Deb. "Begin, Edie."

"When I was in Venice, my dear," said Edie, "there was with our party the kindest and truest specimen of manhood that I have ever met; his name was Nunning. It was a compliment to my admiration for him that made Lil suggest to call the boat the 'Nunnery.'"

"The finest and noblest soul in the whole world is a Socialist named Grey-stone," went on Deb. "Because Pom knew that I held him above all men of earth, she suggested the boat should be the 'Grey Nunnery' in his honour."

"So we are Grey Nuns," said little Dot with wondering, serious blue eyes. "I wish I worshipped somebody, Deb."

"You will some day, Dot," said Edie.

"Let the Sisters begin," cried Pom. "Deb, we wait to hear all about your 'noblest soul of earth,' where and how you met him, and the Sisters will judge if he be worthy to be worshipped."

Deb arose. "Grey Nuns," she began, "I am a Socialist. I belong to a Society of Socialists who call themselves 'Pioneers.'" Deb's eyes shone. "They are the very salt of the earth, these Pioneers; they are scholars, students, thinkers, and workers; I am but a humble disciple, but I do a little. The leader of the Pioneers is Gabriel Greystone. He is an Oxford man, a Fellow of his College, a lecturer on Political Economy. He is tall; he has a white, pure face; and beautiful brown eyes full of sympathy and compassion. He speaks fluently in beautiful language; he convinces everybody. I saw him stand on a platform in a crowded meeting and speak; a shaft of sunlight fell across his face and he looked like an angel. He has a rare and wonderful smile which illuminates his whole countenance; when he flashes it at you, you feel somehow glorified. I have heard him speak in

Hyde Park, and thousands have hushed to hear him, and I have heard him lecture in the schools at Oxford, and students have hung upon his words." And Deb paused.

"What has he done," demanded Lil, "besides talk?"

"He has worked," went on Deb. "He writes books, and tracts, and pamphlets; he lives a self-denying, unselfish life; he works among working men, he travels third-class, he lives in small rooms, on the simplest fare, he has beautiful ideals, and one day he will help to make earth a fairer spot."

Pom asked: "Do the Grey Nuns consider Gabriel Greystone worthy to be ranked with the noblest of earth?"

All the Sisters assented, and Dot's blue eyes were dim with tears.

"Oh, Deb," she said, "I wish I knew him."

"Sister Deb," said Pompilia gravely, take the vow."

And Deb vowed a vow of celibacy for life, unless Gabriel Greystone should ask her to marry him.

"Do you think he will, Deb?" murmured Dot, with wide, solemn blue eyes.

"My dear, he knows hundreds who are finer, fairer, and richer than I. To me he is a god. To him I am a unit in a multitude; he would hardly remember or recognise me; but one must reverence the highest when one finds it." Then Deb sat down.

"Go on, Edie," she commanded.

Edie rose, and her peach cheeks flushed rosy as she began. "Mr. Nunning was with us in Venice. Our Ruskin Society went to Venice for Easter, and Mr. Nunning was our leader. He isn't tall, not any taller than Deb, I should think; he has a beautiful delicate face, clean shaven, and he has blue eyes and black hair. His hair is brushed off from his face like Pom's, but it stands up like a corona or a halo. It is longer than other men's hair and it suits him. His name is, I think, Timothy; he is something at Toynbee; he lives there. I think he has taken holy orders. He lectures on Art and Ruskin, and he writes. He is the very ideal of a chivalrous gentleman. He is polite and attentive to everybody. He is, I think, the most utterly unselfish man I ever met. But I can't do justice to him, he is just the best man in the world." And Edie sat down, rosy and radiant.

"He admired Edie," said Pom. "He was very attentive to her in Venice."

"He was attentive to everybody," said Edie.

"Now, Pom, go on," commanded Deb, when all had agreed that Timothy Nunning was worthy, and Edie had taken the vow.

Pom arose with her pale, pure face framed in its dark hair.

"I belong to the Oxford Extension Scheme," she said. "I am a student. Among the lecturers is a young man——"

"Of the name of Guppy," put in Lil.

But Lil was frowned upon, and Pom proceeded.

"His name is Ernest Michael Bailey. He is tall, with broad shoulders, and a head like a Greek god's. It is a noble head, with a misty cloud of curls about it, like a picture by an old master. His complexion is dark, and his eyes beautiful. He has a full, rich, mellow voice, like soft music. He lectured to us on the Renaissance. He is worthy, Sisters; he has a tender, compassionate heart and a noble soul."

"What has he done?" queried Deb.

"He is an extension lecturer," said Pom.

"So is many an ordinary mortal," declared Deb.

"Let him pass," pleaded Edie. "He must be good. His eyes are kind and his voice is beautiful."

So Pom took the oath and vowed a vow of spinsterhood for ever unless she became Mrs. Ernest Michael Bailey.

Then Lil arose, smiling and dimpling.

"Sisters," she began, "my young man is named Charlie—Charlie Elton. It is a commonplace name enough, I know, and Charlie isn't a bit like an angel or a Greek god. I never heard him hush thousands with his eloquence, nor saw him flash transcendent smiles at people which glorified them. He belongs to no grand society which is going to reform the world. He is only a landscape painter, and he isn't famous. Poor Charlie, he had four sweet little things in the Academy five years ago; but ever since then luck has been dead against him. The wretches refuse everything. Charlie is too poor to marry, and while he is so I will assume the garb of a Grey Nun, if you like. But Charlie is the best fellow in the world, and I shall break my vows directly he asks me—and he will some day."

And Lil nodded and dimpled.

"What is he like?" asked Dot breathlessly.

"Oh, he is 'an every-day young man,'" said Lil; "but I guess he will wear just as

well as your Greek gods and angels, and suit me better. He has brown hair cropped close, a sunburnt face in the summer-time—you see, he punts, and paints, and lounges. His eyes are blue, and he has a little moustache; he has white teeth and strong brown hands. I don't think I can tell you any more about Charlie."

"What has he done?" asked Deb.

"Nothing," replied Lil; "but he is going to some day."

"What will he do?" asked Pom.

"Paint pictures and get heaps of money for them," replied unabashed Lil.

The Sisters looked at each other.

"Has he great ideals and beautiful dreams?" asked Pom.

"No," replied Lil.

"Does he care for the social evils which fester about us?" demanded Deb.

"Not at all," answered Lil; "at least, I never heard him say so."

"You must prove that he is worthy," said Edie gravely.

"Worthy? I should think he is! He is the dearest and best fellow in the world; he dances divinely, he plays the banjo like a nigger, and he is as true as the North Star."

Deb, Pom, and Edie shook their heads, and Dot asked:

"Where is he now?"

"Gone to see his mother in Devon, like the dutiful son he is," said Lil.

"Sisters," said Deb severely, "I move that this young man be leniently dealt with. Let him pass for Lil's sake."

So Charlie Elton was deemed worthy "by the skin of his teeth," as Lil afterwards told him, and Lil took the vow.

Then it was Dot's turn; but Dot worshipped no man, so she was admonished to look out for a worthy object upon whom to bestow her affections, and the meeting concluded.

At eight o'clock next morning the Grey Sisters sat in the cottage at breakfast.

"I hope we did not disturb you last night with our talking so late, Mrs. Chance!" said Edie to the buxom landlady who entered with the eggs.

"Bless you, no," said the good soul. "I like to hear you laugh; and the two gents as live in the other parlour ses to me this mornin' when I took in the coffee, 'Them young ladies is bright and lively; it does us good to hear 'em.'"

"You have other people in the house?" observed Pom stiffly.

"Two Oxford gentlemen, miss, one as

is a professor, and the other a gentleman as has bin round the world a purpose to find out what kind of sand and shells was at the bottom of the sea," and good Mrs. Chance bustled out.

"We must be careful," quoth Edie, "and not speak loudly."

"What a shame," murmured Dot, looking up from her letter. "Father writes that Uncle Jasper is in London, and he is going to call at Goring to see me on his way to Warwick, and I must stay in to see him."

"Oh, what a pity," said Lil. "Must you stay?"

"I must," said Dot. "Uncle Jasper is my godfather, and he is just home from India."

"Poor Dot," murmured the girls.

At nine o'clock they were down at the boat-house and got aboard the "Grey Nunnery." Dot watched them off.

"We shall get to Abingdon to-day," remarked Deb, as she took the sculls and pushed off.

They had a lovely day, the sun shone on them in all its glory, and they dawdled over lunch in the shade, and did full justice to the salmon and cucumber and Edie's lemonade. They left their boat at Abingdon, and in the evening they returned to Goring. Dot greeted them, and prepared tea for them. Yes, Uncle Jasper had been, and Dot had had a delightful day. She had not been a bit lonely, and that was all the little maid would say.

When the supper table was cleared, and Lil got out her guitar, Dot arose.

"Sisters," she said, "I want to take the vow. I have a hero now whom I worship, and his name is Lancelot Lane."

"Dot!" cried the shocked Sisters. "Dot!"

"Yes," went on Dot, unabashed, "his name is Lancelot Lane, and he is a great traveller. He is a scientist, and he has been everywhere. He is not very tall, his face is brown and lined and seamed, his beard is long, and his eyes are kind, his hair is touched with grey. He has been so good to me; he found me under the apple-tree this morning, and he sat and talked to me about his adventures. He is like Othello and I felt like Desdemona."

"Dot," cried Edie, "it is not right to talk so."

"You are old enough to be trusted, Dot," said Deb severely.

"But I wanted to worship somebody," said poor Dot; "you all told me to."

The Sisters looked aghast at each other. "You don't know him, Dot, dear," said Pompilia.

"But, Pom, he was so kind, and he talks beautifully; he is the nicest man I ever met in my life. Let me take the vow."

But the Sisters would not hear of it, and poor Dot felt in disgrace.

"We must look after the child," said Edie.

"She must come with us always," said Pom.

"Let her alone," said Lil. "It won't hurt her to worship a man, and he is a nice fellow, really; I met him in the garden."

Deb, Pom, and Edie groaned, and Lil changed the subject by striking up a lively air on her guitar.

The five Sisters spent Sunday in Goring, and they did their best to look after Dot; but the mischief was done. Directly after breakfast Mr. Lancelot Lane called on the ladies and offered to escort them to church. Edie looked grave, Deb sniffed with disapprobation, Pompilia was cold and reserved, but Lil chatted gaily, and Dot listened and looked demure. So they all strolled through Goring village to the pretty little church.

After dinner the five Grey Nuns climbed up Streatley Hill and wandered through the woods. They came upon Mr. Lane sitting smoking under the beeches and reading "The Monks of Thelema." He joined them in their homeward walk, and they found him a delightful companion. He talked Socialism with Deb, the Renaissance with Pom, Venice with Edie, and art with Lil, while shy Dot listened and glowed. They had tea in the garden under the apple-tree, and Mr. Lane joined them and brought his friend the Oxford don with him. It was certainly very delightful, but Deb, Pom, and Edie felt vague qualms at permitting this freedom after their recent vows. So the Sunday passed away, and the five Grey Nuns started off early on Monday morning to their boat, and they towed and rowed up to Oxford.

"It is the jolliest holiday I have ever had," said Deb sorrowfully, as she prepared to take the train on Monday night back to her duties, for Deb's school required her attention the next day. The rest had more leisure, so they took the boat back to Reading.

It is Whitsuntide a year later, and Deb,

Pom, and Edie have met again in the little cottage at Goring. Changes have taken place during the year. Demure, blue-eyed little Dot is actually married to Lancelot Lane, and the pair are in Switzerland.

Lil is radiant and busy making ready her wedding garments, for Fortune has smiled upon Charlie. He has three pictures in the Academy, and one is making a considerable stir; and Charlie is likely to become famous.

So the three remaining Sisters meet at Goring to recount how faithfully they have kept their vows.

"We won't talk in the house," declared Deb. "I fancy that Lancelot Lane must have heard us last year—the lattice was open."

So in the cool evening they stroll into the rich meadows along the towing path, and they find a seat on a gnarled stump under the willows.

"Let Deb begin," commanded Edie, and Deb began.

"Sisters, I have kept my vow, and it shall be sacred all my life; but it was a vow which never ought to have been taken. Gabriel Greystone is a married man, and has been married for years. I discovered it accidentally. You know I have recently been appointed to one of the London Board Schools. Among the upper standard girls to whom I teach physiology I noticed two bonny, brown-eyed little maids, who smiled bewitchingly when I spoke to them. Their names were Gabrielle and Ernestine Greystone, and subsequent enquiries proved that my ideal man is their father. I have seen their mother once; she is a pale little woman with big black eyes. I get wearied of the monotony of life sometimes, and then I go to meetings and hear Gabriel Greystone talk and flash his beautiful smiles. It puts a new heart into me, and I go on again. I know him just to speak to; but I dare say he forgets me until he sees me again, and then he can never recall my name."

And Deb sighed and sat down.

"What a dreadful thing to have vowed only to wed a man who is already married," said Pom.

"It was a mistake, dear. I took it for granted that he was a bachelor," said Deb. "We make mistakes sometimes in this tangled world of ours."

Then Edie arose.

"Sisters," she said, "I have kept my vow, and am likely to keep it for the rest of my life. Timothy Nunning has gone

over to the Church of Rome. He is going to be a priest. It was the art point of view which attracted him so strongly. Yet it is sad, for Toynbee has lost a worthy worker. I mourn his loss with many," and Edie sat down with cheeks paler than usual.

"Poor Edie," murmured Pom.

"The illusions of life pass away," muttered Deb.

Then Pom got up.

"My Greek god, Ernest Michael Bailey, with the glorious head and the rich, mellow voice, has passed away from the rank of Oxford lecturers. We know him no more at our centre. Yesterday he was married to a rich American heiress. I've seen her. She has a loud, disagreeable voice and a very red complexion. She is rolling in riches; she has a palace in Florence, and they are going to live there. I saw the wedding. I shall always keep my vow."

And Pom sat down, looking paler and purer than ever.

The grey twilight deepened, and the moon arose. There was no sound save the dip of the sculls from a passing boat.

"Anyway, Lil and Dot are happy," said Deb at length.

"And we shall be Grey Nuns for ever," murmured Pom.

"Let us go home," said Edie.

And the three Sisters vanished in the grey twilight.

A PEEP AT THE PLANETS.

EVERYBODY is supposed to know that the stars which glitter in the sky are of two completely distinct descriptions.

First, there are the innumerable stars called "fixed," because their relative motions amongst themselves, or in space, are so slightly apparent to inhabitants of the earth as to be ascertained only by long and skilled observation. It will seem strange to be told that, amongst these, there exist a few, perhaps many, black stars—stars which, having once shone, shine no longer. These fixed stars we behold, year after year, at the same seasons of the year, in the same positions in the heavens, and in the same groupings amongst themselves. In fact they are independent, individual suns, shining by their own light, each sun having, in all probability, a set of planets revolving, at successive distances, round it.

Secondly, there are a few other stars, some of them very bright, although, like

the moon, shining with light reflected from the sun, and visibly ever changing place, called "planets," from a Greek word signifying "erratic." They are Milton's "five other wandering fires," the earth not being, by him, reckoned as a star, though it really is one for the rest of the planets. Uranus and Neptune were then unknown. Their actual wanderings are caused by their progress in their orbits round the sun, besides their apparent change of place resulting from the earth's motion in her own proper orbit, exactly as, in a railway carriage, objects along the road appear to be moving in a contrary direction.

Of course, all the planets being the off-spring, or at least the hangers-on, of the sun, are incalculably nearer to us than any of the fixed stars. "Incalculably" is the correct expression; for only of a very few has the exact, or perhaps only the approximate, distance been determined. With the unassisted eye I can clearly see that an immense interval of space lies between, say Mars, and any fixed star which shines (in perspective) close beside it. I can also see that Venus is much nearer to us than Jupiter. They seem like lamps suspended, far away from each other, in the sky. And, doubtless, other people, by looking attentively, can see the same.

In peeping at the planets it is a good plan, as far as we are able, to begin at the beginning, proceeding from the sun outwards. But the aspect of the starry heavens, the planets themselves, give us absolutely no idea of the solar system. To form a correct notion of what it is like we must disengage ourselves, in thought, from the globe on which we live, and imagine ourselves removed to a distance sufficient to allow us to embrace at a glance the group of little worlds of which a very ordinary star, our sun, is the centre.

Around the sun eight principal planets revolve at unequal distances. Of these eight planets six are attended by satellites, that is to say, they are in turn the centres of smaller systems representing the solar system in miniature. Thus, the earth has one satellite, the moon; Mars has two, only quite recently actually discovered, though previously guessed at by Voltaire; Jupiter, four; Saturn, eight; Uranus, four; Neptune, the most distant known planet up to the present time, has at least one.

The most striking feature in this system,

and that which might almost be called its originality, is that the sun revolves on itself, from right to left, in a direction contrary to that taken by the hands of a watch, and that all the planets move round it, in the same direction, almost in the same plane or level, namely, that of the sun's equator, describing orbits very nearly circular.

Does it not seem as if all these bodies, great and small, had been put in motion by one vast gyratory impulse, and that the secondary systems of the earth, Mars, Jupiter, and the rest, are smaller eddies swimming in and carried along with the great original vortex or whirlpool? Such was Descartes's belief. If the solar system be not actually, at present, a vortex of the kind described, it must have been so constituted in the beginning, by a rotatory movement in the nebula which gave it birth.

The heavens exhibit here and there a great number of gigantic masses of matter in a state of excessive rarity, like a chaotic haze, without definite form, and with only just a sufficient degree of condensation to enable them to emit a feeble light. To distinguish them it requires generally a powerful telescope; with that they are to be found by thousands in the sky. They are the Nebulæ.

If you could by favour obtain admittance to an observatory some starlight night, you should, some days beforehand, inform your friend the astronomer that your desire at present is solely to examine the Nebulæ in different degrees of condensation. Thus forewarned, your guide and instructor will select the most strongly characterised objects, calculate their present positions, and prepare his most powerful instrument. Personally conducted, you will thus be enabled to take a most interesting journey through the heavens.

The nebula of Orion is seen to be far from clearly defined in form. One part of it can be distinguished as more brilliant than the rest; the condensation of chaotic matter being further advanced there than elsewhere. Otherwise its light is feeble. Long streams of matter are visible, whose destiny it is impossible to predict.

The nebula of Andromeda is one of the most remarkable objects in the heavens. It is already almost geometrical in shape, and its centre exhibits a most decided concentration.

The nebula of the Lion consists of

luminous circles or rings, in a quite advanced state of formation, like the rings or spirals of water spinning round in an eddy. The curious double nebulae of the Virgin and Aquarius are evidently approaching their final transformation into stars.

There exists, in short, a complete series of growths, beginning with a shapeless and slightly luminous mist, and ending in one or several suns, diversely associated. True, we do not witness the actual progress of these transformations; but we follow the example of the botanist, who studies in a forest the successive degrees of development of each species of tree.

Consequently, we are led to conclude that the formation of the universe is still being continued before our eyes. At first, we have the separation of nebulae from out of a general chaos; and finally incandescent stars, or other smaller globes—the black stars already mentioned—which we do not see, because their formation has given rise to so little heat that their light is already extinguished.

Laplace's theory that the sun and all the planets have been formed out of one and the same nebula may now be taken to be accepted. From the chaotic matter spread throughout celestial space attraction and grouping generated a gigantic mass. But all condensation caused by the meeting of particles of matter and the destruction of their acquired velocity produces heat. Those particles, by the mere fact of their meeting, became heated. Little by little the entire mass grew into a sphere of incandescent vapour.

We now know the mass of this our nebula, which in fact is the sum of all the heavenly bodies composing our solar system. If this total quantity of matter were equally distributed throughout a sphere whose primitive radius should be ten times the distance from the sun to the farthest known planet, Neptune, it would be found that every cubic mile of this chaos would contain no more solid matter than is to be found in, say, an English shilling. The density of the chaos would be more than two hundred and fifty million times less than that of air remaining in the vacuum of an air-pump.

Such a primordial chaos is less perceptible by our eyes than the very rarest and thinnest mist. It became luminous and visible by condensation and the consequent rise in its temperature. Gradually, under the influence of rotation, the nebulae

divided into parallel zones, or rings. The rings in turn gathered themselves together in luminous spheres, and the remaining central mass became the sun. In other words, the incandescent mass which now forms the sun left behind it, while in its course of formation, small spherical masses which are the planets. The planets, so constituted in their respective places, have all continued to revolve in the direction of the initial movement—like the central remnant, like the sun himself. Such is Laplace's magnificent synthesis, or, if you so prefer it, speculation.

Turning our back upon the sun, the first recognised and acknowledged planet we meet with is Mercury. Some say that there ought to be a planet between the sun and Mercury, which, if found, would have to be named Vulcan. But it has not yet been found, though we can hardly assert that it is not there, the proof of a negative being difficult.

Have you ever seen Mercury? Possibly. But when you saw it did you know it to be Mercury? Doubtful. It is so hard to get a sight of it that, when seen by accident, one may be excused for failing to salute it as an every-day bowing acquaintance.

Although Mercury is the smallest of the heavenly bodies that are allowed to take rank as planets, it has mountains that are more than twice as high as any that we have on earth. Its day, as far as can with difficulty be ascertained, is a fraction longer than our own, while, strangely enough, the enormous planet Jupiter has a day so short, that it is a wonder how its inhabitants contrive to fulfil their diurnal duties.

Mercury's orbit, far from being circular, is a long ellipse—indeed, the longest of planetary ellipses—so that the planet is much nearer to the sun at one time of its year than at another. As the interval between these two epochs is only six weeks, it follows that Mercury passes rapidly through singular alternations of light and heat.

The planet takes no more than eighty-eight days—less than three months—to complete its orbit. The exact time is eighty-seven days twenty-three hours fifteen minutes forty-six seconds. Its orbit being "interior," or lying between the earth and the sun, the planet consequently exhibits phases analogous to those of Venus and the moon. While passing between the sun and the earth, a position called its inferior conjunction, we cannot

see it because it is its dark hemisphere which is turned towards us. Before and after the conjunction we catch a glimpse of its illuminated hemisphere, a bright thin thread of a crescent being then just visible. The telescope can never show it perfectly round or full, because at the time when it should so appear it is behind and eclipsed by the sun. On account of its close neighbourhood to the sun it is visible for us in evenings and mornings only, never in the middle of the night, and always by twilight.

As its distance from the earth varies considerably, according to its position in its orbit, its apparent diameter varies in the same proportion. Its actual diameter is a little more than a third of the earth's, i.e., as three hundred and seventy-six, or three hundred and seventy-three, is to a thousand. This little globe, therefore, is, in round numbers, only nine thousand miles in circumference.

Mercury sometimes passes just between the sun and ourselves, and then appears as a small, very black round spot aliding across the solar surface. During one of these transits, on the seventh of May, 1799, the German astronomer, Schroeter, saw, or thought he saw, during the whole of the transit, a luminous point on the planet's black disk. A similar observation was made on the fifth of November, 1868, by Dr. Huggins, who also saw an equally persistent luminous point on the black disk not far from the centre. From Schroeter's observation it was concluded that active volcanoes exist on Mercury's surface, which would be one more analogy between that planet's physical constitution and the earth's. Schroeter was a skilful observer, and so we know is Dr. Huggins. Nevertheless, M. Camille Flammarion—to whom this paper is much indebted—believes there must have been some optical illusion, for he carefully observed that same transit of Mercury, on the fifth of November, 1868, in search of any luminous point that might appear on the dark disk, with the result that nothing of the kind was visible. None of the other astronomers who observed the transit, with instruments of very various powers, saw anything either.

Our general idea of life on the surface of a planet is that it depends on the existence there of an atmosphere more or less resembling our own. In the present case, therefore, the vital question is, Has Mercury an atmosphere? To this an

affirmative answer may be given. Dr. Huggins, describing the above-mentioned transit of 1868, in the *Monthly Notices of the Royal Astronomical Society*, November, 1868, says:

"While attentively examining the immediate neighbourhood of the black spot formed by Mercury, in the hope of discovering a satellite, if one exists, I noticed that the planet was surrounded by an aureole, or ring of light, a little more brilliant than the sun. Its breadth was about one-third of the planet's apparent diameter."

From which and other competent testimony we may conclude that Mercury is surrounded by a considerable and dense atmosphere.

As weight, or the force of gravity, on the surface of Mercury is only the half of what it is with us, gigantic animals corresponding to our elephants, mammoths, and prehistoric reptiles would move about with the same ease and agility as dogs, gazelles, squirrels, and lizards do with us. We can readily imagine what changes this difference of weight must cause in the material works, and even the intellectual labours, on the surface of another planet.

An important fact, discovered so recently as 1889 by Schiaparelli, will, if confirmed, set at rest all uncertainty respecting the length of the Mercurial day. He states that this planet, while completing its orbit, constantly turns the same face to the sun, exactly as the moon does to us while revolving round the earth; so that one hemisphere is incessantly illuminated, while the other hemisphere is always in darkness. Eternal day on one side, eternal night on the other. These conditions would seem to preclude the habitability of Mercury. But M. Flammarion, who is fond of imagining that every possible world is habitable by vegetable organisms and living creatures, exclaims: "Who knows? The variety of creation is infinite."

Perhaps the shady side of Mercury is preferable as a residence. Its deep and dense atmosphere would cover it with a twilight quite sufficient for the guidance of eyes adapted to the circumstances. There exist, even with us, tropical plants that rejoice in plenty of heat and little direct sunshine. Although larks would not fall ready roasted from the sky, unless they had ventured too far on the sunny side, it is quite conceivable that edible fruits, perhaps also roots, might prosper and ripen on the soil of Mercury.

THE LATE MRS. VERNON.

By A. MOBERLY.

Author of "Lady Valeria," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XV.

I STOOD up facing the light, my head well up that my face might be seen plainly, and waited. I heard him hesitating with his hand on the door, then with a quick, unsteady step he entered.

"Léonie!" the voice was smooth and gentle enough, "so you have come back to me!" And he came forward with outstretched arms. I looked him full in the face. "What the devil!" his arms dropped and he stood thunderstruck. It was as complete testimony to my not being his wife as I could have desired. "Who are you, and what are you doing here?" he asked angrily.

"Sir Claude Levison can best explain the mistake that has been made in bringing me here. I am, as you see, not Mrs. Vernon at all, and I am going directly. I am sorry for having intruded, but it was quite an accident."

"Hullo! Stop! You don't go like that. The door's locked, and I've got the key in my pocket."

"Come and unlock it for me, if you please."

"Not till I've got to the bottom of this. What made you pass as my wife with Levison, eh?"

"I shall be glad to explain it all to you; but at some other time. I have been an invalid and must go home now."

"I'll be hanged if you shall! You've got to explain at once. You've brought me up from the country on false pretences, and you must pay for it."

He looked at me insolently and put his back against the door. A contemptible little creature, slight and neatly made, with tiny hands and feet, a pale discoloured face with worn lines round his blood-shot eyes, a mean forehead, and silky black hair and moustache. He looked such a shabby little bully as he stood there blocking my way, that I felt I had it in me to seize him and shake him into good behaviour, had such a proceeding been either dignified or politic. As it was neither, I turned silently away.

"He, he!" he tittered; "you did that well. Were you ever on the stage? I declare you looked like putting a knife

into me. It makes me nervous to be left alone with you. Hi, Baal, Baal!"

He opened the door and I heard a soft pit-a-pat, then a formidable lower jaw and set of gleaming teeth came first round the door-jamb, followed by the wrinkled, sinister face, deep chest, and bandy legs of an evil-looking bull terrier, who eyed me askance with eyes as blood-shot as his master's. He came silently up to Mr. Vernon and stood beside him, looking from him to me as if waiting for orders.

"Isn't he a beauty? And as staunch as he is lovely. He'd be at your throat in the lifting of a finger, and you might cut him to small pieces before he'd leave go. You're not wanted, sir; lie down." Baal betook himself to a corner where the sunlight fell, and dropped heavily down. "There, you see, I'm not quite unprotected. Now, please, we'll have the story. How do you come to be here, and what is the meaning of your kind interest in my affairs?"

He flung himself into a chair, and his disagreeable eyes wandered over my face.

"Your wife is dead," I told him abruptly. "Has been dead these three months or more."

He started, and a curious look passed over his face.

"The deuce she is! Can you prove that?"

"I think so, with a little trouble."

"Did she leave a will?"

"I cannot tell you. I know very little of her affairs. She was killed in a railway accident, and I was a traveller in the same train."

"Dead, dead," he repeated once or twice, flinging himself back in his chair and biting his nails viciously while he gazed frowningly at the floor. "I can't make your story square with Levison's," he said roughly. "Tell me how you got into her place."

I made the narrative as brief as I could. As I spoke he looked fixedly at me, blinking and biting the ends of his moustache or his nails indiscriminately.

"Yes, you're like her; that's certain. Quite near enough to take in old Fortescue, who never saw her but on her wedding day, smothered up in a veil, you know. You're her colour and height, but not her age—any fool might know that. You're a better set-up woman, too, and I should say a deuced deal sharper; but you are like enough to pass muster——" He suddenly turned round in his chair away from me, and I saw his shoulders shaking with suppressed laughter. "Excuse me, Miss—ah—Margison," he gasped, his

face concealed. "I'm naturally somewhat overcome. This awful news—so distressingly sudden—quite unprepared, you know. I shall be myself again directly."

I did not wait for him to get the command of his feelings, but left the room indignantly. Had there been a key in the door I would have locked him and his dog in together; but it had been removed.

I tried the latch of the front door. It was, as he had said, fastened. The great bolts were undrawn and the chain not put up; even the ordinary latch was caught back. Nothing stood between me and freedom but a narrow strip of iron; but it was sufficient. I was mad enough to strain with all my poor strength at the handle, but it held. I even tore at the woodwork of the door-frame with my nails. It was rotten, and had splintered already where the bolt went in. Then I thought of the upstairs rooms. If I could fasten myself into one of them and call for help from the window! I sped up the staircase, but faster yet came a dull patter behind me, and Baal passed me and reached the landing first. I turned and ran down again, the dog always at my heels. Several doors opened from the hall; one stood ajar. I made for it, hoping to get in first and place the door between me and the creature; but he was too quick for me.

It was a small pantry, the window unfortunately narrow and protected by iron bars. Some one had left the relics of a meal there—dregs of beer in a tumbler, a plate with some scraps of meat-pie, and a knife. It was clean and sharpened to a point by long wear. I snatched it up, and the very touch gave me courage. Baal had some doubts about the proceeding and gave a suggestion of a growl in falsetto. I threw him the remnant of pie, which he swallowed in a snap, and fitted the knife into the lining of my cloak, so that the haft came ready to my hand. There was no object in staying where I was, so I walked deliberately back to the dining-room to make one last energetic demand for release. If it were refused—well, I should be no worse off.

Mr. Vernon was sitting where I had left him, lighting a cigar, his face lighted up with a look of malicious expectation.

"Been taking a look round? I'm afraid we are not quite in order yet. You must give us time."

He puffed at his cigar between each sentence, his eyes contracting as if in the enjoyment of some private joke.

"You can have no possible reason for detaining me here, Mr. Vernon, I think. I am really anxious to go; my friends will have missed me by this time and will be uneasy about me."

"Your friends? Ah, you mean old Fortescue. Don't distress yourself about him. He's safe enough down in the country running after Muriel. Come, don't say you're tired of me yet. Let's be friends, Miss Margison."

"You are not going the way to gain either my friendship or respect," I said gravely.

"No? Well, then, you shall teach me better. I mean to give you the chance." He grinned wickedly to himself, got up lazily, and came to me. "Come and sit down. I've lots to say to you. I heard you out; it's only fair you should do the same by me."

I shook off the hand that he laid on my arm, and sat down determined to hear him out patiently. Baal still stood close to me, his eyes fixed on his master, who drove him away with an oath to his old corner.

"Look at my side of the case, Miss Margison. My wife left me years ago. I'd rather not tell you how. She's dead, so it may be forgotten. She was a rich woman. I'm a poor man; but I'm left to keep up the place with the child on my hands, too. The other man dies, and she lives abroad till it suits her to come home, when, for my daughter's sake, I resolve to forgive the past and take her back. I know nothing of the accident—how should I? I only hear from Levison that I may expect to meet her here to-day. Hurry up to town full of joy and expectation, to find—what? That my Léonie is lost to me for ever, and that a stranger is masquerading in her guise."

I was not taken in for a moment by his burlesque sentiment; nor did he intend that I should be.

"You cannot accuse me of attempting to deceive you, Mr. Vernon. Sir Claude Levison might have known the truth if he had cared to do so. Colonel Fortescue knows it already."

He started and looked rather alarmed.

"Since when, I wonder? Not long, or I should have heard from him. I've no time to lose, then. So here's the state of things. If my wife is dead she has left a will; and whoever she has left her money to, it is not to me. Here I am, a beggar, with a rich wife and

a rich daughter, and not a penny to call my own. I'll stand it no longer. If Léonie had lived she would—she must have helped me. If the money has gone to Muriel I'm further off it than ever. Now, you have chosen to take Mrs. Vernon's character upon you for your own purposes, and I intend you shall continue to do so for mine. Do you understand? None of your friends have come forward to recognise you, so I recognise you. You are my wife. I am prepared to swear to it."

He was in wicked earnest. There was a world of vile intention in his leering eyes and cynical smile.

"What do you say, my dear?" he asked, moving towards me.

I don't know what I said—how I answered him. A hot surging flood of rage and horror seemed to rise in me, blinding my eyes and sweeping away all consciousness of what I might be saying or doing. It must have passed in an instant, for his extended hand had not touched me, or else he had drawn back in fear. I was clutching the knife-haft under my cloak, and incoherent words were pouring from my lips. He was in abject terror, his face a sickly grey, and his cigar had dropped from his fingers.

"Here, Baal, Baal," he screamed. "Watch her!"

Baal came up in two bounds and stopped, his glaring eyes fixed on me, his nostril quivering, every muscle under his sleek hide tense, but silent, watchful, quivering with impatience for a sign from his master.

Mr. Vernon picked up his cigar.

"You handsome shrew! You'll want some taming, I see. Shan't like you any the worse for having a spirit of your own, but you must be made to understand who is master. I shall leave you to cool now and think it over. Remember, you'll be better off as Mrs. Vernon than as a friendless pauper, which seems the alternative. You'll have plenty of money to spend—you'll have to draw the cheques, you know, or perhaps, if the lawyers can put me up to some dodge for arranging the money supplies satisfactorily once for all, you may, if you choose, depart in peace, though I hope you will not. I seem to have taken a fancy to you. Now turn that over in your mind while I go and look in on Levison. I should not advise you to stir or make any noise. Baal won't stand it."

He drew on his gloves, keeping his

unpleasant eyes fixed on my face to the last, took up his hat and stick, and departed. I was too thankful that he had gone at first to do anything but rest in my chair and try to think. Then the full horror of the position came over me and I felt I must shriek or swoon, but a note of warning from Baal, a sort of strangled growl, and a sidelong glance of his savage eyes stopped me on the verge of hysterics. Minutes went by, and then hours. The sunlight travelled in a long slant across the wall of the room and then died out, and the slips of sky above the shutters grew greyer. It was cold, the chill of evening was in the air, and I was stiff and cramped. The fire in the grate died out in ashes, for I dared not move to replenish it. Baal had dropped his muzzle on his fore-paws as he lay, but was on the alert at the slightest stir I made. A deadly terror of the brute came over me, of the ferocious savage working the will of the cowardly savage his master. My fingers touched the knife, but I felt how weak and tremulous my hand had become, even if I could have tried to kill him in cold blood. Now the sky above the shutters grew deep bluish black, and the welcome yellow light of a street lamp shone on the ceiling. But it was cold, cold. Through the open folding-door icy breaths blew on me, ghostly stirrings and flutterings sounded in its dusky depths. Once a boy went by outside dancing and whistling; I listened to him as long as I could, and was grateful for the sense of human companionship. The church bells rang out at last, and then passed more footsteps and voices. I would have cried out in desperate disregard of consequences, but my voice was lost in my throat. I was becoming faint with excitement and long fasting. At last cold and hunger and weariness overcame me, and I sat in a dull stupor that was not sleep, only numb misery.

The church bells died away and the footsteps ceased by degrees till the street was still as a tomb.

I was roused by a voice outside—some one swearing at the darkness in the hall. Then I heard the striking of a match, and Mr. Vernon stumbled in and nearly fell over Baal. He drove him away with a kick and a curse, and groped his way to the chimney-piece, on which stood two bronze candlesticks. When he had lighted a candle in one he carried it to the table in front of me, and then stood deliberately inspecting me.

"Had a nice quiet time, eh? You look cold. Confound the fire, it's out. Why didn't you keep it alight? Baal objected, I suppose." He grinned spitefully at me as he turned up the astrachan collar of his coat and leant, swinging one leg, against the table.

"Feel sorry for yourself, I should say. Ready to be a sensible girl and come off with me to have a snug little dinner somewhere, and look in at the theatre—no—Sunday—I forgot—at Levison's after? Always something going on at Levison's, and he'll be awfully glad to see you." He laughed foolishly. "I say, Muriel would be jealous if she heard him. He's sweet on you, is old Levison—tells me I ain't good enough for you!"

His face was flushed, and his hot breath as he bent over towards me reeked of spirits.

"You ought to be grateful to him, though. We've got it all settled amongst us. You shall be my lawful wife all correct and proper, and you shall still be my Léonie. Bless you, Levison showed me how to work it. He had gone off from here to that old fellow—Walker—Welsher—What d'ye call him—the hospital doctor—and told him you were still mad, 'nor-nor-east'—that you persisted in calling yourself Miss Margison, and that he thought there might be trouble now your husband had come for you. Doctor said it was just what he had been expecting all along, but it was only hallucination and would wear out in time." He stopped to laugh to himself. "You don't seem interested, Léonie, my dear. I beg your pardon—you were about to say—?"

I had tried to speak once or twice, but my lips were stiff and my voice wouldn't come.

"Don't be sulky, it's unbecoming to a woman of your complexion; you'll find that a smile will do more for you with me than all those black looks. I was going to explain Levison's idea. We are to be married over again, 'Elizabeth Margison, spinster, to Thomas Vernon, widower.' Levison will see about the special license to-morrow. The old doctor jumped at the plan. He's coming to the wedding; only he and a parson Levison knows. The whole business is to be kept as dark as possible to avoid scandal. We shall be married here, in this house, and you can call yourself Mrs. Vernon with a clear conscience ever after. What do you think of that? It's not every one who would go

to all this trouble to satisfy a mad wife or a vixen like yourself. What are you frowning for still? Faint or squeamish? Here, drink this."

He pulled out a pocket-flask and hastily filled the cup. The smell made me feel even more giddy and helpless. I pushed it away as he tried to force it between my teeth, and the contents spilt on the ground. There was no more in the flask, and he swore angrily.

"I've given you a fair chance, you obstinate jade. I'm not going to stand this shilly-shally work. I've that old doctor's authority for all I do, and if you are going to behave like a raging lunatic he shall lock you up for one. He is quite ready to do so. You don't leave this house except as Mrs. Vernon. I wish I'd thought of the madhouse at first, it would have been the shorter way. Confound Levison and his meddling! I've tried fair means with you, and as they don't seem to answer——"

He stopped suddenly and turned to listen. There were voices outside—men's voices. Was it possible that I could recognise one, or was I in truth going mad?

Baal ran to the shutter and listened too, with his nose at the opening. The voices stopped at the house door and the bell was rung. Mr. Vernon seized my arm.

"Be silent! Stop where you are. If you call out or stir I'll kill you, or Baal will. Here, Baal, watch her!"

He crept stealthily out to the hall. A thundering knock on the door sounded through the house, and then the bell pealed again and again. The deliberate, iron-shod tread of a policeman drew near and the voices recommenced. The knocking and ringing went on for a short time longer. Then Mr. Vernon stole back with an evil smile of satisfaction, and I heard the iron-shod tread descend the steps and move slowly away. I was sick with lost hope and desperate. I couldn't cry out, but I caught up the heavy silver-mounted flask that lay on the table, and with a last rally of strength sent it crashing through the space of glass above the shutter, uttering a despairing shriek for help. He turned on me, his wicked face aflame with passion.

"At her, Baal; seize her!" and I was flung backwards against the wall by the weight of Baal's heavy body as he sprang at my throat.

I had instinctively flung up my left hand with my muff on it to protect my face, and the stiff lining of my high fur collar baffled the dog's grip. He drove his feet into me struggling for a firmer hold, tearing, rending, worrying. I groped fruitlessly for my knife, but it was under him. Then came a mighty crash and an inrush of men's steps.

"This way! Hullo!" shouted one.

"Major Tarrant!" I screamed. "Help! help!" and slid down insensible.

It was Major Tarrant. His familiar, grim face was the first thing I saw when I opened my eyes. He was kneeling beside me, and my head was resting on his shoulder.

"Are you better?" he asked.

"Oh, help me, save me, keep him away!" I cried.

"There's nobody here," he answered gruffly. "See for yourself. Now, hadn't you better come home?"

I staggered to my feet joyfully, and he helped me into the hall and out into the street.

A policeman was chasing some loitering little boys from the steps, and a hansom was waiting. He put me in silently, and except that he put his arm round me when he found that from sheer weakness I was slipping from the seat, conducted himself in his usual grim, taciturn fashion.

Mrs. Brent, tearful and agitated, was on the look-out for us; but evidently in obedience to orders asked no questions and volunteered no remarks. She relieved her feelings by extra careful tending, and when fed and refreshed I dropped my head on my pillow she said, "Major Tarrant's love, ma'am, and you may like to know that he is going to stay here to-night. I've given him Miss Magrath's room." I heard his heavy tramp pass my door later on; it reminded me of the old school-room days, and after a draught of Dr. Millar's favourite composing mixture I sank to sleep, happy, thankful, and protected, with the old accustomed whirr of the sewing-machine running through my dreams.

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IN TITANIA'S BOWER.

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CALENDAR FOR 1893.

IN TITANIA'S BOWER.

CHAPTER I. A FOREST HOME.

"I THINK you had better give up your search, Osmond," said Lady Gilchurch, in a voice of languid sweetness.

The voice accorded with the face and figure of its owner as she lay back in the phaeton her son was driving—a handsome youth of some fourteen or fifteen summers.

"No, I won't," replied the youth doggedly. "There can't be more than one such girl in the forest. And I know her name; it is Titania."

"That is a name out of a book," said Lady Gilchurch, yawning.

"Anyhow, it is good enough for me," replied her son, with enigmatic curtness. "If there were only some one to ask!"

They had been driving along an apparently interminable road that, reared straight up on end before them, had the appearance of a gap in the hillside; but now they had reached the crest of the hill, and they saw stretched before them a veritable forest scene. Tufted masses of verdure, bathed in sunshine, stretched in velvet softness as far as the eye could reach, except where Southampton Water lost itself in the shimmering haze of the sea-

line. More to the purpose as a foreground, in the dip of the road appeared a gipsy cart drawn up on the turf—a smart and neat-looking vehicle, from the iron funnel of which rose a column of blue smoke against the dark foliage of a group of aged oaks.

"Shall I tell your fortune, my darling gentleman?" cried a fine, dark gipsy girl, coming forward to the carriage. "You were born under a lucky star, it is easy to see, my handsome gentleman! There is a beautiful young lady with golden locks who is looking out for you."

"Is there?" cried the boy. "That is just what I wanted to know. Here, hold the reins, mother; I must have a talk to this girl!" He soon came back to the carriage, smiling. "Well, I have found out all about Titania," he said; "and she knows a lot, does that girl, I can tell you."

Titania was the latest of young Lord Camlan's fancies. On the previous day, when fishing the stream that ran by Ambrehurst, without success and heartily tired of the whole business, he met on the banks a young girl who was pursuing the same sport, but with better results. And she was so friendly and jolly, and so ready to give the less practised piscator the benefit of her experience, that she at once won the boy's heart. It was the jolliest

time possible he had with her, only it was too short; and his companion had laughingly eluded all his attempts to find out where she lived, except that she owned to being a forester. Nor would she promise to meet him again on the river.

Following the gipsy's directions, Osmond turned off along a green drive, which he followed to a white gate, which was locked, and stopped the further progress of the carriage.

Having vaulted over the white gate, Osmond pursued a narrow track, beyond which appeared an old stone gateway, green with moss and lichen, and stained with many marks of wind and weather, but still stout and serviceable, with massive stone piers, each surmounted by some rampant animal of heraldic species. An elaborately-twisted iron grille, showing here and there traces of tarnished gilding, closed the solid gateway. There was no bell to be seen; and if there had ever been a bugle-horn hanging to the gate, as its antique appearance suggested, it had vanished.

Osmond vigorously shook the gate, and suddenly a dark face appeared at the wicket—a face surmounted by dark frizzled locks and a red “fez.”

“What shall you want?” asked the new-comer concisely, and in no friendly tone.

“Perhaps you are Mr. Herondale?” said Osmond, who had been duly instructed by the gipsy.

“No, no!” said the other, as if irritated at the supposition. “You cannot see him. He is not well sufficiently to see anybody.”

“But my visit is to Miss Herondale,” said Osmond boldly. “Please give her my mother’s card, and tell her I—Lord Camlan—am waiting to see her.”

The other scrutinised the pasteboard mistrustfully, and scrutinised the visitor, too, from top to toe, the yellow “whites” of his eyes gleaming as he rolled his eyeballs up and down.

“Well, you can enter,” he said at last, and pulled a cord which brought upon the scene an elderly but brisk-looking manservant, who, in obedience to a gesture from the other, unlocked the gate, and admitting Lord Camlan, led the way into a quiet grassy courtyard, with a mossy sun-dial in the middle. At the further end was a balustraded terrace, with broad marble steps, over which rose the ivy-covered gables of an ancient mansion. Up the marble steps went the serving man,

and entered the hall that opened from the terrace—an oaken-panelled hall, cool and even chilly at this uncertain time of year, and crossing the hall, he led the way through a fine doorway of black oak into a charming old-fashioned garden sloping to the south, where the light and colour and brilliance of the scene was almost overpowering in contrast with the gloom behind it. The central figure was Titania, seated in a wicker throne near the marble basin of a fountain, the dancing spray of which took rainbow hues in the sunshine—hues that were repeated in the iridescent tail of a proud peacock who sunned himself below, attended by his sober-coloured dames.

Titania herself was fair and petite, with frizzy golden curls about her forehead, a saucy nose, full ripe lips, and well-rounded chin. At her feet crouched a negro girl, black but comely, whose dark polished skin and black glistening hair contrasted with the other’s fairness of hue and raiment. Scattered about the human group were two or three terriers and a large lemon-coloured and white dog of the St. Bernard breed. There was also a large, silky Persian cat, and some white tumbler pigeons fluttered in security about the fountain. Then there was a background of fantastically-clipped holly, box, and yew—shady arbours, battlemented turrets, globes, and pyramids, cunningly carved by the gardeners’ shears—and in one corner, overtopping the great holly hedge that enclosed everything, stood a building that at first sight appeared incongruous with the rest, a kind of Moorish kiosk, with horseshoe arches and gilded arabesques, with a dome above and gilt pinnacles all very rich and glittering.

Seated among her court Titania looked so much more grown-up and formidable than as Osmond had seen her, with a fish basket over her shoulder, and in a short homespun skirt, that an unusual feeling of shyness came over him. The dogs, however, covered the confusion of his apologies by their noisy greetings, and Titania recognised him with a pleased smile.

“Then you have found me out. What a clever boy you must be!” she cried, holding out a hand.

“Give me something harder than that,” said Osmond, laughing. “Everybody knows the queen of the forest.”

“Ah, you have been with Sidonia, the gipsy,” said Titania quickly; “that is her

flowery way of talking. But how did you manage to get through the gate?"

"A dark man in a red cap let me through," said Lord Camlan.

"Ah, that was Bensadi," said Titania. "It is a wonder he did not send you away. You see," she added, in an explanatory way, "my father is a great invalid, and it is necessary to keep the place very quiet. But I have my 'at homes' like everybody else, only not here, but in the forest at a place Sidonia calls my bower. Oh, yes, I will show you the place some day, and then you can come and see me without encountering Bensadi."

Osmond replied that he would appreciate the privilege immensely.

"But first," said Titania, "you must be introduced to my friends here. This young lady with the ebon locks is Cobweb—Cobweb, permit me to present to you Lord Camlan."

Cobweb showed her pearly teeth in a pleasant smile, and nodded her head till the gold rings in her ears tinkled like little bells. She wore heavy gold bangles, too, about her wrists, and a gold collar round her neck, and in a tunic of amber silk, with a crimson girdle and turban, was a very bright and radiant-looking creature indeed.

"And now for the dogs. The big one is Rollo—go and shake hands, Rollo; as for the little ones we call them by any name that comes handy; but now that they know you they will be friendly when we meet again."

Once on a friendly footing with all concerned, the moments flew like lightning for Lord Camlan. Titania, too, was charmed with her new companion. She had always longed to have a friend, and a nice boy like this was everything desirable. She received him unquestioningly as a gift from the gods; and she had all kinds of things to say to him. Cobweb brought coffee, cakes, and sweetmeats, and then amused them with little feats of dexterity, such as keeping half-a-dozen biscuits dancing in the air and rivalling the fountain in their graceful movements, till they disappeared one by one between Cobweb's strong white teeth. And then Cobweb brought out a Moorish mandolin, and sang little ditties in an unknown tongue, with a plaintive, tinkling refrain.

"How pleased mother will be with Cobweb!" cried Osmond enthusiastically, and then he started. He had forgotten

all about Lady Gilchurch, who was waiting for him all this time.

"You wicked boy," cried Titania, laughing at his remorseful face. "But why did you leave her outside?"

"Could she climb the five-barred gate?" asked Osmond reproachfully.

"True; I forgot that you did not know the secret. Perhaps I had better show it you, and we will make our excuses to your mother."

Titania rose attended by her little court, by Cobweb, by the dogs, even by the pigeons that fluttered high above her head, and, as she entered the house, threw joyous somersaults over the roofs and chimney-stacks. The peacock remained behind, contenting himself by giving a few guttural cries, and spreading his tall like a fan in honour of the departing procession.

"This is the shorter way," said Titania, avoiding the hall and unlocking and opening a door that gave upon a long gallery lighted from above, and covered with soft matting. Here were a number of casts, fragments of antique sculpture, and, conspicuous among them all, a female figure in marble, roughly blocked out as to the lower part, but showing a remarkably beautiful face and bust, which had evidently received the sculptor's finishing touches.

Osmond involuntarily paused before this work of art, struck by some indefinite but powerful chord of memory or imagination.

"My father's last work," said Titania, in a low voice; "he will never finish it now; but come quickly, for I think I hear his footstep, and it will distress him to find us here."

After all Osmond need not have hurried away on his mother's account. The groom stood before his horses, which were discussing the contents of the nosebags he had thoughtfully provided for them. But the carriage was empty, and a glance towards the greenwood showed a pair of dark figures conversing earnestly together under the shade of a fine old beech. One of the figures, conspicuous for its red cap, was clearly Bensadi, and as evidently Lady Gilchurch was the other. The slight turmoil of Titania's procession attracted their attention, and they turned and walked slowly back towards the carriage, where Bensadi quitted my lady with a low salaam and glided away towards the house.

"And you are Titania!" said Lady Gilchurch, impressing a cold kiss on her forehead. "I have heard all about you, dear, from your good Mr. Bensadi, and I hope we shall be very great friends. I shall send Osmond to fetch you soon for a long visit." The words were friendly and even affectionate, but the manner was strangely repressed, and conveyed a feeling of constraint with all its apparent warmth.

CHAPTER II. A FAMILY MYSTERY.

DURING the drive home to Ambrehurst Lady Gilchurch was unusually grave and thoughtful, and gave only absent-minded replies to the light-hearted talk of her son, who was in the highest spirits at the success of the expedition; and as soon as she arrived at her own house, she made for Lord Gilchurch's apartments. In a general way Lord Gilchurch hated to be disturbed during the afternoon, when he was supposed to be engaged in writing his "Memoirs," a book that, as he had seen a good deal of the world, and had a memory well stocked with stories more or less scandalous, was looked for with some anxiety. But Lord Gilchurch was always polite to his wife, and dismissing his secretary by a glance which conveyed a sense of subdued annoyance, he turned to his lady with a pleasant smile.

"You are just come at the right time, my dear," he said. "I have reached that point in my memoirs where I am sent as special envoy to Morocco, and all kinds of charming reminiscences are evoked by the thought that it was there I saw you for the first time. But, upon my word, you are even still more charming now."

Lady Gilchurch frowned. "I think, my lord," she said icily, "that you might spare me these memories of degradation."

"Degradation, nonsense!" said Lord Gilchurch airily. "There is nothing degrading in being sold as a slave. It is the fortune of war and might happen to any of us. It is something to be worth buying."

"Without entering into that, Lord Gilchurch, I have to tell you of something serious. Herondale is living and not far from here, but his mind completely gone."

"Well, why should you concern yourself about him?" asked Lord Gilchurch testily.

"There is a girl," continued Lady Gilchurch, "a girl two years older than Osmond, and the boy is full of a romantic attachment for her, and he insists on my asking her to stay with us. Will it be safe?"

"Why not?" replied Lord Gilchurch calmly. "By all means have the girl here and make much of her. You owe her a little reparation, perhaps, and I am much mistaken if she has not a grown-up sweetheart already."

"You know more than I do, it seems, about the matter," rejoined the Countess suspiciously.

"In the most natural way in the world! Captain Rohan, who is a far away cousin, is, it seems, stationed with his battery or troop, or whatever he calls it, at Christchurch. He has just honoured me with a call with his friend Wimpole, an army surgeon, I fancy, and as it happens the son of my old friend Dr. Wimpole, who was once physician to the Embassy. And Rohan hoped you would call upon this Miss Herondale, who lives in rather an isolated position, with an invalid father; and the household practically ruled by one Bensadi, of whom perhaps Rohan is jealous. But you might ask them here, Rohan and his friend, while the girl is with us."

Lady Gilchurch nodded assent to this, or at all events acquiescence.

"It might be a good match for Rohan," said Lord Gilchurch judiciously. "That is if there's a will—as there ought to be—and so on, for I'm told that Herondale inherited all his uncle's immense fortune."

"Was it so great, then?" said Lady Gilchurch gloomily.

"I ought to know something about it," said the Earl, falling into his easy narrative vein, "for Tom Herondale's affairs were the subject of certain secret negotiations in which I was concerned. Herondale, you must know, was brought up as an engineer, and being of an adventurous turn he took service with the Shereef and Kaid of Omazan, which is a tributary state to Morocco, the then Shereef being a man reputedly of advanced ideas, who meant to have waterworks, gaslights, and all such Western notions in his capital. But when Herondale arrived he found that this was all make-believe. The Shereef was full of ambitious notions, but not in that direction. He wanted guns and ships, having a design to save his tribute to the head Sultan, and perhaps to take his place. For he was one of the highest swells in the Mohammedan faith, and thousands of fanatical tribesmen looked upon him as the coming chief of their religion and race. Well, he hadn't got the ships and guns, but he had the money to buy them. He was the possessor of an

immense treasure. It is said that one of his ancestors had come across the hoarded wealth of some Phœnician colony long ages ago destroyed in some barbarian irruption. Anyhow, there was the treasure, gold in ingots by the ton weight, diamonds, pearls—untold wealth, in fact. Well, the Shereef was uneasy about his treasure, for he knew that the Sultan at Fex had got wind of it, and knowing the skill of English engineers, he had got Tom Herondale out there to make him a treasure house that even if discovered should be impregnable to any assailants.

"Tom saw that this was a dangerous business, but he set to work and finished the shop after a couple of years' hard work. The Shereef was mightily pleased, loaded Tom with presents, and sent him to the coast with an escort of trusty tribesmen. Trusty enough they must have been, for they had secret instructions to put Tom out of the way and bring back the plunder. But some young woman about the Shereef's household had taken a fancy to the young Englishman and warned him of the plot. And so he gave his friends the slip, reached the coast in safety, got on board an English ship, and landed on Blackwall Pier without even sixpence in his pocket to pay his fare to London. However, he soon got employment at so much a week, and living on crusts and tobacco smoke, put by nearly all he earn't.

"In the meantime, the Sultan, convinced of the existence of the treasure, demanded an immense sum from his tributary, and, not getting it, carried fire and sword into the Shereef's territory. He took him prisoner, too, and doubtless would have extracted his secret, but the poor Shereef took poison and escaped the torture. And the Sultan never got that treasure, although it is believed that many poor wretches perished for not revealing a secret they knew nothing about."

"But somebody must have known," said the Countess listlessly. "There were workmen, no doubt."

"A curious kind of epidemic had carried off the few who were employed. No, as I understand, the secret of the treasure house was confined to the Shereef Omar and Tom Herondale. Well, Tom worked at his bench, or whatever you call it, for five years, living in the same frugal way. At the end of that time he had saved two hundred and fifty pounds; and with that he went on his travels. He came back in

two years' time a rich man. He went into Parliament, was made a baronet, and so on. About that time I went to Morocco to negotiate a commercial treaty. Said the Sultan in effect: 'Find me the English engineer who made a treasure house for the Shereef of Omazan, and you shall have your treaty.' We were obliged to say in our diplomatic way that we should have great pleasure in looking for him if he would give us more precise indications. But the old Sultan only shook his head, and we did not get our treaty. I met Sir Thomas soon after in the lobby of the House, and told him of the Sultan's pleasant request. He looked rather blue, I assure you."

"But why should he look blue? and of what use would he have been to the Sultan?" asked Lady Gilchurch artlessly.

"Well, do you suppose that he took away all the treasure? Why, it must have amounted to millions to have justified the Shereef's ambitious plans. And think how much gold would weigh to the value of even a hundred thousand pounds. Why, a ton, at least, a load for ten mules. And consider the difficulty of getting even such a train as that across a wild, unsettled country, where every tribal chief levies blackmail. I doubt whether Tom Herondale took anything but the jewels which he could conceal about him."

"Well, the end of it all is," said the Countess, "that I am to ask Titania and these other people."

"Oh, yes; why not?" said Lord Gilchurch.

And so before night the Countess had despatched a formal invitation to Titania at Bolder Hatch, and the same messenger had charge of another missive addressed to Joseph Bensadi, Esq., with instructions to deliver it into no other hands but his. This latter note was written in Arabic characters, and would not have been easily read by any one but Bensadi himself. It was to this effect: "You are on the right track; pursue it and let your unhappy sister pursue hers. Peace be with you."

Short as was the note, it gave Bensadi much material for consideration. And here it may be as well to explain the exact position that Bensadi occupied at Bolder Hatch. He was not a constant resident there; he occupied chambers in an old city nook, where he lived and carried on the ostensible occupation of a dealer in Oriental wares—chiefly drugs, gums, and spices, but also in gems,

enamels, and Moorish pottery. To his chambers resorted at times all kinds of curious people from the East—swarthy Berbers in white turbans and long caftans; turbaned Jews, whose traditions went back to the Moorish kingdoms of Spain and the glories of the ancient Alhambra; Arabs of the true faith from all the corners of the earth. Mysterious intelligence, flashed round the world from unknown sources, found a focus at Bensadi's; and few striking events took place, whether in the far interior of Africa, or on the burning plains of the Soudan, or among the marble palaces and jewelled thrones of India, without reaching the cognisance of Bensadi's circle, and generally long before they were known to the world in general.

As for Bensadi's origin, it was said that he had been sold when a boy as a slave in the market at Fez, and purchased with his sister, a beautiful young thing, and had been bought at a high price by an agent on behalf of Sir Thomas Herondale, who had caused them to be shipped to England, where they had been, after a fashion, adopted by that wealthy but eccentric baronet.

In course of time Bensadi had obtained a great influence over his benefactor. The young Arab professed to have inherited the knowledge of certain-recondite secrets, by means of which human life might be preserved to an almost fabulous age and pristine vigour continued to the very end. That was an attractive programme for Sir Thomas, who, however, notwithstanding Bensadi's care, died at the age of only seventy years, leaving as his only testamentary paper a memorandum, stating that as Bensadi had promised to prolong his life to the age of the early patriarchs, there was no need to think of making a will for the next hundred years or so. Thus everything Sir Thomas possessed went to his sole surviving relative, Stanley Herondale, the sculptor.

If Bensadi felt some natural chagrin at his benefactor's want of consideration, he did not allow it to influence his conduct to his successor. Stanley Herondale, when he succeeded unexpectedly to his uncle's wealth, had passed through a period of storm and stress that had apparently unhinged him for the practical business of life.

Originally Herondale had appeared to be one of fortune's favourites. Of an hereditary genius for art, he had followed

his father's profession of a sculptor, and had acquired some fame and success at an early age, while his handsome person and winning manners had made him a favourite in the highest circles. Proud of his nephew, Sir Thomas showered all kinds of benefits upon him, and made him a munificent allowance. But a fatal curiosity led the sculptor one day to visit Bolder Hatch, a property which his uncle had purchased as a residence for a beautiful girl, Amina, who, according to report, was being trained and educated to become his wife when the process of rejuvenescence should have been duly accomplished. Herondale gained admittance to the lady's bower, and her dazzling beauty inspired him with an overwhelming passion. An elopement was the result, followed, it was thought, by a private marriage, of which, however, no evidence had been forthcoming.

Sir Thomas, naturally outraged by these proceedings, at once repudiated his nephew and cut off his allowance. Herondale, who continued to live at an extravagant rate, although he had now only his art to support it, soon fell into dire embarrassment. Amina, who believed herself to be the cause of his ruin, and perhaps thought that without her he might be able to retrieve his position, disappeared from his house, having first, however, obtained a promise from Sir Thomas to provide for her child, the infant Titania, then just a year old. From that time forth nothing more was heard of Amina, and Herondale was in no condition to pursue any researches as to her fate. He had fallen into a state of profound melancholy and dejection, during which he attempted to end his existence by poison; but Bensadi had kept an eye upon him, and came to his rescue. By his skillful treatment and the antidotes he administered Herondale's life was preserved, and Bensadi provided for his wants till his uncle's death put him in possession of a large fortune.

But the influence that Bensadi had obtained over him still continued paramount. To those about him Herondale now appeared as a mere automaton, moved hither and thither at the will of Bensadi, or of Mustafa, who was Bensadi's bond-slave and shadow, and who had been appointed Mr. Herondale's personal attendant. What they wished him to say he said, to write he wrote; but there seemed to be little volition of his own in the matter.

For about two years Mr. Herondale had been in possession of Bolder Hatch, where Titania had lived from her childhood. Sir Thomas had always provided liberally for her bringing-up and maintenance. A clever and accomplished woman, Miss Dexter, had taken charge of her education at a liberal salary. There was a strong affection between teacher and pupil, and when Miss Dexter's functions ceased on the new household being formed, the separation was a great blow to both of them.

Yet Bensadi had proved himself a very liberal and amiable guardian. Titania loved horses and rode fearlessly and well. Bensadi had taken care that the stables should be well filled, and Titania had her own hunter, and went out with the New Forest hounds whenever their meet was near at hand. On one of these occasions, when the fox had led the way through a line of country quite unfamiliar to her, Titania nearly came to grief in a deep watercourse which her horse had failed to clear, and she was rescued from her dangerous position by a young officer from Christchurch barracks, who had witnessed the accident, and who gallantly plunged into deep water to rescue her. The two young people, thrown together in this unconventional way, conceived a sudden attachment for each other. In her walks and drives she was constantly meeting with Captain Rohan, who, however, met with no success in his attempts to storm the citadel of Bolder Hatch. All his attempts to cultivate the acquaintance of Mr. Herondale were repulsed with coldness. Bensadi was at the gate whether he came early or late.

But Rohan had enjoyed one sweet stolen interview with Titania in her favourite forest haunt. She had shown him the way to it once, but had laughingly told him that he would never be able to find it again, and to his vexation Rohan found this to be the case, else it was a sufficiently remarkable place, being a circular clearing in the midst of a thick growth of old yews and thorn-trees—probably the most ancient of all the forest trees then growing, and that might have seen Rufus and his train when they went out to hunt the red deer. There were traces of an earthen rampart rising out of a kind of sunken basin, and in the centre of the circle was a huge stone, that had once probably stood upright, but that now lay half buried in the soil and broken into

three pieces. Although to one or two favoured persons the place had become known as Titania's Bower, yet its ancient traditional name was Bedgebury Ring.

CHAPTER III. THE TALISMAN.

BESIDES Lady Gilchurch's formal invitation, Titania had received a scrawl from Osmond promising to drive over and fetch her on the day fixed. Since the invitation came, Bensadi had departed for London, taking with him Mr. Herondale and Mustafa. The ostensible object of the visit was to consult a famous physician as to Mr. Herondale's health, which had seemed of late to be failing. But before he left Bensadi had told her that her father wished her to provide herself with every requisite for her visit, for, no doubt, she would require smart dresses and other paraphernalia, and had signed a handsome cheque for that purpose. And Titania, nothing loth, had given her orders right and left, and had not spared for anything. But on the eve of her departure she felt a strong desire to pay a last visit to her favourite haunt in the forest, which, under the stress of her preparations, she had of late neglected.

No doubt there were young gipsy scouts lying perdu in the bushes, for Titania had not gone far when she met Sidonia, who in general estimation was the queen, or anyhow the princess royal, of gipsydom. And her accomplishments were worthy of her high lineage. She sang with a charming voice the choicest music-hall ballads, and danced—ah, to see her dance, advancing and retiring with alluring eyes—would make reverend seigneurs long to set to her.

There was a strong friendship between the two young women, who had known each other from infancy, and it had been confirmed by mutual good offices.

"You need not tell the gipsy, dear little lady, that you are going away; she read it in the stars. There are lords and marquises waiting for you, darling lady, but you will be true to your own dear love."

"Oh, I don't want any of your dukerins," said Titania, laughing, "but all the same you shall not prophesy for nothing. I am rich just now with my purse full of gold pieces, and here is one for you, Sidonia; that will never be missed."

"Keep your gold, darling little lady," said Sidonia, thrusting back the proffered gift. "You shall give me a lucky six-

pence as a keepsake, and I will give you, ah, something more precious than all the gold in the world."

So saying, she produced from her bosom a little object enclosed in a wash-leather bag, which proved to be an oval piece of some translucent stone, with a neat hole drilled at one end so that it could be hung by a string round the neck. The stone was covered with curious incised figures, but was otherwise of no intrinsic value.

"There is a charm in this, dear lady, that will carry you through all the troubles that are in store for you. I can see a voyage across the water, and things that are now hid shall be revealed."

Again Titania laughingly cut short the gipsy girl's predictions, and bade her tell how she could vouch for the virtues of her talisman.

"It is yours now, dear lady, as it should be, and as it was meant to be from the beginning, as I will show you, darling lady, if you will sit down with me on this stone."

Sidonia's story went back to her childhood, when she would meet in the forest the tall and grizzled form of Sir Thomas Herondale. He, too, was addicted to haunting Bedgebury Ring, and would sit on this very stone musing for hours, especially of late years, when his strength began to fail. There was a hole in the centre of Bedgebury Stone, and Sidonia, watching him unseen from the bushes, saw him one day unloose some little object carefully from a gold chain he wore round his neck, and drop it into this hole. Sidonia pointed out how small was the hole that one could hardly get two fingers in. But Sidonia was gifted with a hand marvellously small and flexible, and an arm which at that time, Sidonia said, looking with complacency at her present well-rounded limb, "was no bigger than a stick." And as soon as the old gentleman had gone she contrived to squeeze her hand into the orifice and to push it down till she reached her prize. It cost her all the skin of her knuckles to draw out her hand again with the charm, which she had kept ever since. And she was sure it would prove a powerful charm for Titania, preserving her from shipwreck and the designs of an evil man.

The evil man was of course Bensadi. Titania accepted the gift with pleasure, pleased to think that it was a kind of family amulet. But as for Bensadi, she thought that Sidonia was too hard upon

him. He was always kind to her, although, doubtless, not friendly to gipsies.

"He is kind only to betray," said Sidonia, and in proof of what she said she would call a witness. A shrill whistle brought upon the scene a young man. Titania knew him well enough as Sidonia's sweetheart, otherwise a gipsy dealer in New Forest ponies, who was known about there as Chitsey Spot.

"Now you shall hear," said Sidonia. "Chitsey," she cried, addressing her lover, who had remained bashfully in the background, "approach and tell the little lady what you saw in London!"

Thus adjured, Mr. Spot explained that business connected with the buying or selling of ponies had taken him to St. Martin's Lane on the day but one before, and that hanging about near the church he saw a cab in the distance containing two persons whom he recognised as Bensadi and Mr. Herondale. Sharing Sidonia's dislike to Bensadi, he had had the curiosity to follow the cab, not far, but to a well-known banking-house, where the cab stopped and Bensadi alighted and entered the bank. Soon after came out a clerk, bareheaded, with a book, and went to the cab and spoke to Mr. Herondale, who was inside, and who took a pen which the clerk gave him and signed his name in the book. And after that came two gentlemen in mulberry-coloured coats with gold buttons, who bore between them sundry canvas bags which seemed of great weight, for the cab trembled as they were put in, and when Bensadi came out and rejoined his friend, and the cab drove away, it rolled along as heavily as a steam-roller! And so slowly that Mr. Spot kept up with it with ease. And luckily the man who drove recognised Chitsey as a congenial spirit and offered him a seat on the box, and the time passed in learned talk about horse-flesh till the City was reached and passed, and the cab stopped in a darksome kind of lane, where somebody was on the look-out for it, for a door opened at once and two dark Jewish-looking men came out, and shouldered the canvas bags and carried them in and shut the door. But the door had been long enough open to give Mr. Spot a glimpse of the river right through, with cranes and ropes and blocks hanging about, and the black bulk of a long, low steamer with two black funnels, each of which had painted on it in white something in the shape of a young moon. And then the cab was

ordered to drive to a big City hotel, and Chitsey left it there, having business of his own to look after.

Titania listened attentively, and thanked Mr. Spot for telling her all this. But it did not make much impression upon her. She knew that Bensadi often had things from abroad, and it seemed natural enough that he should send money to pay for them. Sidonia, with more experience of the world, thought that with all his opportunities and the virtual control of all Mr. Herondale's actions, nothing was more likely than that he would strip him of everything, and then, as Chitsey expressed it, "sling his hook."

When Titania reached home she was told that her father and Bensadi had just arrived from London, and that the latter had been asking for her, and wanted to see her at once. She found him in the garden, where he was walking to and fro with solemn, leisurely tread, his gaze riveted on the starry heavens.

"My child," he said in a musical, thrilling voice, "I have been occupying myself with your future destiny, as to which I have had of late sundry misgivings. Your youth, thanks to my watchful care, has been passed in that freedom and healthful action that is the best preparation for a great part in life. For that part you were designed from your infancy. Hitherto it has been kept from your knowledge, lest your unaccustomed eyes should be dazzled by its brilliance. But now, at your father's request, and with his sanction and paternal blessing, I am permitted to reveal it to you. Titania, you are destined to be the sharer of my future, the companion of my labours, the honoured partner of a descendant of the Caliphs."

"But that is impossible," said Titania, heedlessly interrupting the flow of Bensadi's discourse, so astonished and, indeed, horrified was she at the proposal that he had made with so much solemnity.

Bensadi's eyes sparkled with fire, his nostrils quivered, his whole face was illumined with the force of his anger, from which Titania involuntarily shrank back in alarm.

"Foolish girl," he cried in a tone of bitter contempt and anger. "Can you stay the stars in their courses with your weak, frivolous will?"

"Oh, I thought I was destined for a great part in life," cried Titania defiantly, now recovering her courage.

"A young woman," said Bensadi, "is

but clay in the hands of the potter. But I have said enough. Let the thought of your destiny sink into your heart, and extinguish any foolish youthful flames that may have kindled there, as the lightning flash extinguishes the ignis fatuus."

Bensadi disappeared within the little kiosk, not having even given Titania his customary benediction of "Peace be with you." Decidedly he was angry, yet there was something respectable in his anger. It was quite impossible that he should be the sordid adventurer such as Sidonia in her dislike would paint him.

Before she slept that night Titania placed her amulet upon a silken cord and fastened it round her neck. The moonlight gleaming on the translucent stone seemed to invest it with a strange, unnatural lustre—as if Ashtoreth recognised her own, and the dusky jewel acknowledged her illustrious sway. And Titania's sleep was chequered by strange dreams full of splendid pageantry, and yet with a chord of mystery and fear running all through.

CHAPTER IV. MY LADY'S GARDEN-PARTY.

OSMOND made his appearance at the appointed time to drive Titania and her belongings to Ambrehurst. Cobweb accompanied her, and the smallest of the dogs. Bensadi stood at the gate and waved benevolent adieux.

"When you shall come back you shall change your mind," he said quietly enough, but with a sinister meaning that sent a cold thrill through Titania's veins.

But then she had made up her mind not to go back very soon. The week at Ambrehurst finished, she had arranged for a cruise in her little ten-ton yacht, the "Gem." Thomas, who ruled over the stables, was also commander of the yacht, and had entered joyfully into the project. He was coachman and groom only of necessity, for he had come of a family of fishermen, and could handle a boat almost before he could walk.

Lady Gilchurch received Titania with the same strange mixture of affection and aversion that had before puzzled Titania. Yet in every way she was treated as a favoured guest, and Cobweb was in especial favour with her ladyship, who delighted to exchange badinage with her in her native tongue, and to listen to her tinkling melodies and pathetic sing-song.

The week passed pleasantly along. Titania and Osmond were happy enough,

fishing the streams and riding and driving here and there. And Captain Rohan and his friend Horace Wimpole, the assistant-surgeon, came to a dinner-party. But Lady Gilchurch herself engrossed Captain Rohan, and Wimpole chiefly fell to the share of Titania. But he was a nice youth, she thought, and gave her news of her old friend and governess, Miss Dexter. Actually, she had married Dr. Wimpole, a widower, Horace Wimpole's father; and the pair had taken a house for the season at Lee-on-the-Solent. Horace and the stepmother were not on very good terms, it seemed, and Titania proposed to herself a mission of reconciliation. Her cruise with the "Gem" should be in the Solent, and Wimpole might pay a visit to his parents at the same time. Horace was delighted, and might he bring Rohan too? Titania graciously assented.

And then Lady Gilchurch gave a garden-party which drew the whole county to Ambrehurst. Curiosity brought the chief people to the place, as the house had long been shut up, and Lord and Lady Gilchurch were almost unknown. The general verdict was that the Countess was very beautiful, but a great deal too languid and insouciant in receiving people. Captain Rohan arrived among the earliest guests, and persuaded Titania to show him over the grounds, where they lost themselves in bosky thickets and among groves of rhododendrons, and spent a delightful half-hour.

"Somehow," said Titania, half to herself, "everything seems to have gone right with me since I got my talisman." Rohan was amused that anybody should indulge in such foolish superstitions. But Titania said they were not foolish if they gave her confidence and courage, and she had noticed about the stone that it changed its temperature very suddenly and strangely, and that when certain persons approached it grew quite cold. During the last few moments she had noticed this sudden chill.

"It is in the air," said Rohan, with a slight shiver. But next moment they saw approaching along the shaded path the figure of Bensadi.

"People are looking for you everywhere," he said rather sharply to Titania, "Lady Gilchurch wants you especially. She is waiting for you on the terrace."

Titania, in some confusion, ran off towards the terrace. Rohan would have followed, but Bensadi detained him by a gesture.

There was something in the bearing and glance of Bensadi that inspired respect if not confidence; and when he gravely called Rohan to account for his attentions to Titania, in the tone of one responsible for her welfare, the young man felt himself compelled to give a full explanation. If there was anything clandestine in their intercourse, it was because his open advances had been received with something like contumely. "There is a reason for that," said Bensadi, and he went on to state that legally the stain of illegitimacy attached to her birth, and that she would not inherit a penny of her father's large fortune unless he could be brought into a condition of mind to make a will in her favour. Such was the object Bensadi had in view, and he implored Captain Rohan to leave Titania to those who had the chief interest in her welfare. Captain Rohan replied with equal frankness that such considerations could not weigh much where affections were mutually engaged, as he had reason to hope in the present case. Bensadi's face grew dark, his hand instinctively sought his side, as if expecting to find a dagger there.

"Enough," he cried; "I have spoken. Keep out of my path lest harm should befall you."

And muttering some Arabic sentences, which from their tone were hardly blessings, he turned on his heel and departed.

The guests were now departing in a flock, and Rohan had no excuse for remaining. But he contrived to have some last words with Titania.

When and where could they meet again? "Oh, somewhere in the Solent, perhaps," said Titania airily. She had promised herself a week's cruise in the "Gem," and after that she was engaged to Lady Gilchurch and Osmond for a caravan tour from the New Forest to one of Lord Gilchurch's residences near Guildford. As the cruise would include a visit to Mrs. Wimpole, at Lee-on-the-Solent, it was quite possible that he might hear news of her through his friend Horace.

CHAPTER V. OFF THE "NEEDLES" ROCKS.

CHRISTCHURCH was in sight, where the "Gem" lay at her moorings, mirrored in the placid tide. Thomas had engaged a nephew of his, a fisherman and experienced seaman, to help in navigating the craft, and there was a boy, Jack, engaged as cook, who had a genius for

frying fish, but whose knowledge of other departments of cookery was merely rudimentary. But Cobweb had a marvellous knack in curries and pilauks, and eccentric dishes in which her mistress took delight.

There was no time to lose if the tide was to serve, and before long the little craft was dropping down towards the harbour mouth, a narrow channel between two sand-banks, where the tide was now running out like a mill-race. A little fishing village stands on one of the sand-banks, the whole population of which had turned out to witness the departure of William, and little Jem, and Uncle Tom, on their deep-sea voyage. The seamen felt that the eye of their native village was upon them, and exerted themselves to the utmost to take their craft out smartly—awkward as the channel is, with touch and go in the bay outside, where, if the "Gem" had not had enough way on her to wear round on her heel, as it were, she must have gone ashore and stuck there till next tide. Happily, the "Gem" proved herself such and of the first water as she bravely came round, and catching the breeze that was creeping along the shore, shot forward into the deep water beyond the bar. Hengestbury Head loomed above them with its crown of shaggy heath, and the green slopes of its vast entrenchments, and beyond, the coast line stretched in a wide sweep of cliff and serried headlands. But wherever there was a dip or break in the rigid coast line, some pleasure settlement had been planted there. There was Southbourne with its pier, and Boscombe and Bournemouth beyond, and a steamer could be seen making its way from Swanage.

As the wind had fallen light, and the tide was running strongly out, the men let go the anchor close inshore to wait for the first of the flood. It was a real midsummer sea, almost calm, but covered with little rippling waves that made gentle music as they broke in phosphorescent sparkles against the vessel's side. The setting sun sent its ruddy beams into the deep curve of Alum Bay, and lighted up the coloured sands of its huge cliffs till they shone with iridescent glow. And presently the moon rose majestic over the desolate shore, and touched everything with a pale primrose light. It was an evening of enchantment. The seamen felt the charm of it as their rugged faces were lit up by the glow. And Jack the mousse, who was alicing kidney

beans for the evening meal as he sat on the bowsprit heel, seemed quite entranced in the glamour of the scene. Cobweb, too, had brought on deck a small Moorish zither, and now began a little wild and plaintive melody with a tinkling accompaniment that somehow seemed to harmonise with all the surroundings.

As Cobweb finished her song, and silence once more settled on the placid waters, the strain was taken up close at hand, as, rounding the point, a long, low steamer with two funnels stole almost noiselessly along. The song ceased next moment as if in compliance with a gruff order from some one on board; but Cobweb had heard the strain, and, springing up excitedly, she cried:

"Dat my countryman, missie, sing dat!"

Thomas, watching the strange steamer's progress, hailed her in somewhat contemptuous accents:

"You'll be running athwart the Cockleshoe if you don't keep out a bit!"

Somebody peered down at them from the steamer's deck as her engines slowed—a swarthy face, surmounted by a gold band.

"Tank you, tank you! Are you a pilot, sar?"

Rejoined Thomas: "No; but I can put you through this here passage as well as e'er a one of them."

Said the voice: "All right, my friend. Then will you come aboard?"

Thomas turned to his mistress.

"What do you say, Miss Tansie, if I pilot 'em through the channel and they gives us a tow? 'Twill save a vast o' time, you know, miss."

Titania assented, and Thomas hailed the steamer to heave a rope on board. This was done, and the "Gem" hauled alongside the steamer—which had no name painted on her, but bore the emblem of the crescent on her funnels—when Thomas climbed on board, and at the same time one of the steamer's crew descended with a hawser "to help heave anchor," as he said. The man was a strong, swarthy negro, and saluted those on board with a display of white ivories as he stepped forward to haul in the anchor chain and secure the towing hawser—all very smartly and readily done. In less time than it takes to tell it the boat was swiftly gliding along in the track of the steamer, which now, under Thomas's pilotage, stood out from the shore.

The respect and confidence inspired by Thomas's position and experience for some time silenced any criticism upon the course he took, or anyhow that the yacht took presumably under his direction; but when the steamer, instead of heading for the channel between the island and the mainland, took a sweep in the contrary direction as if for the open sea, it seemed to those left on board the "Gem" that something had gone wrong. They were leaving behind them the lights from shore and headland, and the cheerful gleam from the settlements scattered along the coast, and actually they were about to round the dark mass of the Needles rocks, the shadows of which were cast in inky blackness over the waves, and before them gleamed the open sea, with a shadowy sail here and there showing in the hazy moonlight.

"Thomas ahoy!" shouted William from the deck of the "Gem." "Where away, my lad?"

There was no response from Thomas, but a voice from the taffrail cried:

"We shall take you a nice leetle voyage round the island, my friends."

"But I don't want to go round the island!" cried Titania, feeling a vague alarm. "Tell him to stop and put our man on board again." But there was no reply to William's repeated hails. "Then cast off the tow-rope!" cried Titania. And William left the tiller in her hands while he ran forward to cast off.

"No, you don't touch dat!" snarled the black man in the bows; and as William still advanced, a knife gleamed in the air, and he recoiled from its offered point.

"Hanged if this ain't kidnapping, miss!" cried William, as he stood facing the black ready for a spring, and yet seeing no chance of evading the gleaming knife of his opponent.

Titania saw the danger in which her retainer stood, and how this powerful negro had them at his mercy.

"Cobweb," cried Titania, "quick! Crawl into the cabin and bring the revolver that hangs under the lamp!"

Cobweb performed her errand with silent swiftness; but although Titania was a good pistol-shot, the two men were too nearly in a line to permit her to fire except with the risk of shooting her own man.

"William," she said, in a low voice, "when I count ten, drop, and I will fire over your head."

William comprehended, and still keeping his face to the foe, he waited till he heard

the word ten, and then threw himself flat on the deck. But the other had comprehended too, and he ducked with the rapidity of light, and the bullet passed harmlessly overhead. But although it failed of its destined billet, the bullet, by great good fortune, hit the quivering tow-line, severing half its strands, so that next moment the weakened rope snapped off with a loud crack; and in the recoil the length of hawser attached to the "Gem" curled round the negro's body and disabled him for the moment, and William was quick enough to rush in and disarm the man and secure him before he was able to disengage himself. Then hoisting foresail and mainsail with Jack's assistance, William was soon able to bring the "Gem" before the wind, which was now blowing a pretty stiff breeze from the south-west.

The people on board the steamer had either not noticed the parting of the hawser, or were afraid of running aground if they put about in pursuit of the boat. They slowed and stopped, sounded the steam whistle, and hoisted some kind of signal flag, the meaning of which was unknown to the crew of the "Gem." But the negro understood it, for, watching his opportunity, he dived head foremost into the sea, and was soon seen striking out vigorously for the steamer, which lowered a boat filled with a dark, savage-looking crew, with knives and pistols sticking out of their embroidered sashes. The boat picked up the negro, and then seemed inclined to give chase to the "Gem"; but the latter was now spanking along at a slashing pace towards the Solent, and pursuit would have been useless. Following the movements of the steamer with her glasses, Titania saw that the steamer had lowered another boat, and had landed a solitary figure on the nearest projecting point; and then the steamer picked up both her boats and steamed away at a pace that soon carried her out of sight.

CHAPTER VI. A CRUISE IN THE SOLENT.

As the tide had now turned and was setting strongly in for the strait, it was useless to think of putting back for Thomas. The rest of the crew, indeed, were disposed to chuckle over the retribution that had fallen upon him.

"Th' ole man'll have a proper smart walk for his payns," said William sily; "he won't be playing at piloting again in a hurry."

And now they were racing through the narrow channel between the island and Hurst Castle, that showed grim and black against the moonlight at the end of its long spit of white shingle. Yet it looked snug and cosy, too, as a nearer view revealed its red-tiled roofs peeping among its white bastions and dark, grassy slopes, with lights gleaming here and there among the silent black guns, that seemed to be keeping watch and ward over the channel. Lights gleamed, too, from the forts on the other side of the channel, hardly a mile across, and a boat loaded with artillerymen who were singing merrily enough, but not too sweetly, was passing from one shore to the other.

That night the "Gem" took up moorings in the roadstead of Lymington, where a goodly number of small yachts were already assembled, making the waters bright with flitting lights as little boats shot to and fro, while the night air was enlivened with impromptu concerts, in which Cobweb's songs were especially applauded.

Right in the fairway of the estuary lies the pretty little new settlement of Lee-on-the-Solent, with shining sands and bathing machines, and a full equipment of hotels and lodging-houses.

"I wonder if anybody is looking out for me!" said Titania to herself. And then she espied a group upon the sands, of which one of the component parts was her old friend, who waved a light crimson sunshade in their direction, a salute which the "Gem" acknowledged by dipping her ensign. Then anchor was dropped and the dingy brought round.

Mrs. Wimpole received Titania with great delight. The Doctor, who was very well-preserved, but slightly crusty in demeanour, was polite, but reserved. But he warmed up a little when he found that the visitor hailed from the New Forest.

But the Doctor was inclined to draw in again when Titania, giving an account of her adventure with the steamer off the Needles, declared that she had never felt really afraid during the whole affair, for she was in possession of an amulet that would save her from any serious harm.

"Amulet! rubbish!" cried the Doctor, in scornful accents.

But his wife was more credulous.

"Do show it me, dear," she whispered to Titania, who produced from her bosom the little oval of carved soapstone. The Doctor examined it as well as his wife,

and treated it with more respect in the end. He brought out a magnifying glass, turned it here and there, and scrutinised it minutely.

"My dear," he said, looking up from the task, "this is undoubtedly curious. Here are ancient uncial characters, probably Phœnician, very minute, but of archaic character; and on the other side a quite modern inscription in Arabic, which I can read and translate."

Dr. Wimpole polished his magnifying glass, and also his gold-rimmed spectacles, and with pen and ink began carefully to transcribe from the minute inscription on the amulet. "This," he said at last, "is to the effect that in the year 1269 of the Hegira in the month Rājab, Omar, descendant of the true Caliphs, deposited the treasure which Allah had bestowed upon him in the shrine of the holy imaum."

Titania professed her gratitude to the Doctor for the light he had thrown upon her amulet, but she was firm to regain possession of it, rejecting all the Doctor's suggestions of sending it to the British Museum for the deciphering of the Phœnician inscription. She could not feel happy while the talisman was out of her keeping, and its possession infused in her a sense of strength and security, that if it were the product of imagination, went to show the value of that faculty.

And further thought of the matter was driven out of her head by the appearance of Captain Rohan, who had induced Horace Wimpole to bring him to be introduced to his, Wimpole's, stepmother. And Mrs. Wimpole was really anxious to conciliate her husband's family, and vastly pleased to find that Horace was ready to show the olive-branch.

"It is the talisman," she whispered to Titania, as the party sat down to luncheon by the open window, with the pleasant waters of the Solent stretched before them, studded with white sails. There was a general assent when Titania proposed a cruise in the "Gem," and to visit the big ships and forts at Spithead. All were ready to go except the Doctor, who had writing to do—and probably a nap—in his study.

There was a pleasant, north-westerly breeze, which served them either way, and a tender, hazy light, in which the white wings of the yachts came softly into view, with some green jutting promontory, or now and then the dark hull of a great war-ship. The huge white forts loomed out of

the sea haze, with now and then a curl of white smoke from a ship at gun-practice, while the deep-toned thunder followed, softened by distance.

They dined on board on chicken and rice, prepared by Cobweb's skilful hands, as the sun was going down into the sea red and glorious. And then they went about and made for Cowes harbour, which opened upon them bright and charming with crimson reflections from the clouds above, and the green and gold of the incoming tide; while from sea and shore thousands of twinkling lights sparkled and were reflected in the placid waters, mirror-like except where ruffled by the oars of passing boats, that left behind a line of golden ripples. Something in the way of a regatta had been going on, and as darkness came on all the club-houses and hotels shone forth in lines of brilliant illumination; the yachts were decked with Chinese lanterns and lights of all kinds, and the broad estuary presented a scene of fairy-like and dazzling beauty.

When the boat was put about for the opposite shore, and passed out of the brilliance of Cowes into the calm tranquillity of the Solent, the moon was just rising redly among the mists of Spithead, and wandering lights of red and green swept to and fro. Now a great ocean steamship with long lines of lighted ports came hooting out of the hazy distance, or a panting tug, or a great schooner yacht came rustling past like a bird of prey, and the little "Gem" danced in its wake, becalmed by the mighty spread of its canvas.

But silence had fallen over the whole party. Mrs. Wimpole was genuinely asleep in a corner. Horace was thoughtfully smoking forward, feeling rather out of humour with himself and his friends. His stepmother, more experienced than he in affairs of the heart, had given him a hint that it was of no use his thinking about Titania. And he had thought a good deal about her lately, and she had seemed to like him; and now he saw himself at a stroke deprived of the illusions of love and friendship.

"Would I have brought Rohan along here had I known?" he said to himself savagely.

Titania had taken a turn at the helm, and was sitting with the tiller in her hand watching the sail, and keeping an eye on William, who was on the look-out forward. Rohan sat near, and followed every movement of hers with admiring eyes.

"Titania," he began after a long silence, "I have really something very particular to say to you when you are able to listen to me."

"Forbidden to talk to the girl at the wheel," she replied with sober meaning, and Rohan sank back in sayage silence, gnawing the ends of his moustache as he watched the glittering path that the boat was cutting through the water.

But Titania presently called to Jem to take her place, and edged up to Rohan, who still kept his gaze fixed upon distant objects.

"Well, I shall be cross too," said Titania, also beginning to study the distant horizon. "Only are we not wasting time a little if you really have anything to say?"

Their eyes met, and they both laughed.

"Yes, I was foolish," said Rohan. "But I have been longing for a serious talk all day, and when you snubbed me just now— But, Titania, a crisis has come. I have to leave Christchurch. I have received a staff appointment at Gibraltar that I have been hoping for a long while, and now it is mine—there, I shall throw it up unless you will go with me, Titania."

"But that is terribly sudden," cried Titania, not knowing exactly what to say.

"It is sudden," rejoined Rohan, "but I can't bear the thought of leaving you. Oh, Titania, if you could only make up your mind to be a soldier's wife!"

"Is there anything so very terrible in that?" said Titania, with a glance in which there was so much tenderness, as well as archness, that Rohan hesitated no longer.

"My darling," he cried, clasping her round the waist. "And I have been so afraid of you, my little fairy."

"But you mustn't be rash," said Titania, not caring, however, to disengage herself from Rohan's encircling arms. "You don't know all about me yet."

"I'll jump the rest," said Rohan, kissing her rosy lips.

But as time was short and immediate arrangements necessary, Rohan could see only one way out of the perplexity—that Titania should marry him at once, and give him the right to act for her, when he could call Bensadi to account, and provide securely for her father's future comfort. And as really that was the best plan, Titania was not difficult to persuade into consent. But then the practical question arose: Could they marry without her

father's consent, Titania being under age—such consent being evidently a thing unattainable? Yes, a marriage by banns was possible—any other course involved perjury at one or other of its stages. But by putting up banns in the respective parishes of Christchurch and Bolder Hatch, the wedding might be celebrated in the secluded church of the latter.

Next day Captain Rohan and Wimpole were obliged to return to their quarters, and the rest of the week's cruising lacked a little of the charm of expectation. But there were Rohan's letters to look forward to, and replies to cogitate over. And then came another scrawl from Osmond to say that all was ready for a start, and that Titania must meet the van at the cross-roads just outside Romsey town.

CHAPTER VII. A CARAVAN TOUR; WITH MILITARY MANŒUVRES.

At the cross-roads just out of Romsey town on the Forest side two caravans were drawn up, both as smart as paint and gilding could make them. A small group of country children were admiringly gathered, half in hopes that the vehicles were the precursors of some circus or wild-beast show. "That ain't no show," cried an older and more experienced rustic. "That's 'lectioneering business, that is." And people seemed disappointed that there was no distribution of leaflets and political addresses, and no attempt to get up a meeting on the village green. Osmond was looking very business-like in velveteens, with a yellow bandanna twisted round his neck, and a harekin cap, a parting gift from Mr. Spot, on his closely-cropped locks. He received Titania with enthusiasm, and dragged her away to inspect all the arrangements. There was the sleeping van, with its berths and all toilette requisites, which she was to share with Lady Gilchurch; and the kitchen van, which was charged with all the materials for a prolonged picnic, and with a neat *batterie de cuisine*, presided over by François, a French cook from one of Lord Gilchurch's houses.

Osmond was eager for a start, and to show his skill in putting to the horses, which were grazing by the side of the road. But Lady Gilchurch and Titania preferred to follow the cavalcade at a little distance through the town, as if they did not belong to it, not being yet quite inured to the position. It was a pretty

scene as the glittering vans crossed the bridge over the brimming little river Test, with the low but massive tower of the Abbey church showing over the roofs of the quiet little town; and the church with its fine Norman nave must be visited by Titania, and formed a cool and pleasant resting-place in the heat of the day. Beyond the town towards Hursley Osmond had found a pleasant camping ground under the shade of some fine beeches. And here they lunched and lounged till the heat of the day was spent; and then they made a long trek to the other side of Hursley, a pretty, quiet, solemn little village, with a fine church, under the invocation of Keble of the "Christian Year."

The first night passed pleasantly enough. The party had encamped on a breezy common half-way between Hursley and Winchester, a place that Sidonia had recommended for its sweet air and plentiful water supply. The night was fine and the stars shone gloriously, and now and then a shooting star glanced like a kindling arrow across the firmament. The heathy, sandy common was uninfested by flies or gnats, and the soft breeze of the night as it gently stirred the curtains of the sleeping chamber, diffused a balmy perfume of heather and wild herbs. A donkey and a cow or two formed the acquaintance of the animals of the cavalcade. Rollo, Titania's big dog, slept under the van, and Osmond in a hammock slung across a light tent; and except for the quacking and splashing of ducks in a neighbouring pond, as twilight deepened into night, a perfect stillness fell upon the scene.

But in spite of the peaceful nature of her surroundings, Lady Gilchurch's sleep was troubled and disturbed. Titania heard her calling out in some strange language; it seemed as if she imagined herself in some terrible danger with which she could not cope. But her final words were clear and decisive enough. "Let her perish," she cried, "if I can save my boy." Titania heard no more after that, for she fell into a profound sleep, and the sun was shining in at the windows of the van when next she opened her eyes.

They were on trek at an early hour, in order to get through Winchester and reach their camping ground beyond before the heat of the day had become excessive. Soon among the meadows they found St. Cross, with its old-world church and cloisters, and its bedesmen, who loitered

about the gate to watch the vans pass by. Osmond was delighted that he was taken for a gipsy wayfarer, and served with a manchet of bread and a draught of ale at the buttery hatch.

The vans went on up the gay little High Street of Winchester, with its market cross and quaint piazza, and the broad shaded walk that leads under the houses towards the cathedral, and that winds among the old gravestones and under the grey buttresses to where St. Swithin was buried out in the rain and the sunshine. And coming from the New Forest, who could fail to look for the tomb of the Red King, whose corpse upon old Parkiss's cart must have followed the same route as the gipsy vans? And who that was a disciple of the gentle craft could have passed the tomb of good old Isaac Walton without a visit, or what lover of good literature would see unmoved the resting-place of the inimitable Jane Austen?

But when they were clear of Winchester it came on to rain a little, and thunder muttered in the distance. Yet the weather cleared again presently, and everything smelt so fresh and balmy that the rain was voted to be a blessing in disguise. And here they forsook the main road and took a by-way which led to a famous Beacon Hill, where there was a grand view over the New Forest, and with a glass Titania could make out the Bolder woods, and thought she caught the gleam of the gilded minaret of Bolder Hatch. The Solent, too, was stretched in full view, with all its fleets of war and pleasure, and the Isle of Wight in its lovely verdure; while on the other hand there lay the wooded varied plain of Andred's Weold stretching into and through the heart of Sussex. And between West Meon and Petersfield they found another pleasant common, where things were made snug for the night. And pleased with the neighbourhood—that is, Titania and Osmond, for as for Lady Gilchurch she only cared for landscapes that pleased her son—they established a kind of permanent camp and had many pleasant rambles; some into Gilbert White's country, among the hanging woods and romantic ravines, which came as a delightful surprise after the wild and woldy downs. And from here they moved on into Woolmer Forest, where now no forest is, but still with wild, pleasant scenery, heaths, and open spaces suitable for encampments.

On rising ground near Woolmer Pond,

which recalls some Highland loch among the moorlands, the vans came to a halt. There was a spring close by, the wanderers had been told, and Titania and Osmond went to look for it. Turning the corner of a copse they came suddenly upon a cavalry vedette, which had come to a halt there. Horses were tethered here and there, arms piled, and the blue smoke of a fire rose against the dark background of pines.

They were looking out for the enemy, said the young officer in command.

"You don't happen to have seen anything of them?" It seemed that the vans must have passed through the enemy's country, but without having met with any troops. "There will be a battle round here to-morrow," said the young fellow, "about ten thousand men on each side, so you are in the luck of it."

Then a signaller came riding down from the top of the hill, where he had been waving his flag to some one on the top of another hill, and the orders were to close in. And the resting men sprang to their feet, and horses' bridles were adjusted, and girths were tightened, and the whole troop vanished behind the wood.

However, the news of the approaching battle made the wayfarers wish to push on so as, at all events, to reach the outskirts of the fight. And after dinner the vans were driven on for three or four miles, and halted on a common with a great highway running through it. But the night was not passed without sundry alarms. The enemy's outposts were already placed in the immediate neighbourhood, and pickets every now and then marched past, exciting the anger of the dogs who were tied up underneath the vans. And occasionally a stray group or two, taking the vans for regular traders, would rattle at the door with the whispered enquiry:

"Mother! haven't you got a drop o' whisky handy?"

Titania was up betimes and inhaling the delicious morning fragrance of the heather, and calling Osmond, the pair made for an elevation where they could get a glimpse of the country round about. Hindhead was the chief summit in view, looking noble with his dark crest wreathed with the morning's mist, and hills beyond hills stretched away to the horizon. Turning the other way, to where the white road wound through heath and common, they saw a cloud of dust arise in the distance and heard a kind of thunderous

rumble, that, as the dust-cloud came nearer and nearer, resolved itself into the thud of horses' hoofs and the heavy roll of a field battery going at full speed. Turning at the foot of the hill, the whole battery left the road and dashed across the common, the guns bounding and leaping over the uneven ground, the captain galloping in front, who, as he reached the crest of the hill, raised his hand, and reining up his horse on its haunches, the whole cavalcade came to a halt behind him. Guns were unlimbered, ammunition served out, and everything ready for action on the instant. And then, with a gruff roar, the first guns of the battle spoke forth, directed upon the rough copse of underwood beneath, without apparent purpose.

But next moment a number of puffs of smoke broke forth from the edges of the copse, and the crackle of rifle fire spurted along here and there, and, as if a train of combustibles had taken fire, from hedge-rows, ditches, and gorse bushes in front of the wood blazed forth flashes of light, and their curls of smoke rose all around. Then the guns went at it all the harder, with a noise as if somebody were beating an enormous drum.

Titania, sheltered behind a huge furze bush, held her fingers to her ears, and begged Osmond to go and stop that noise, who only laughed and asked her if she thought that battles were put off to please girls. But presently a bugle sounded from the copse below, which said as plainly as possible, retire; and the sputtering fire died away, and with a parting salvo the artillery fire ceased.

"Victory for us," cried Osmond.

"Why, there are the enemy," said Titania, unsealing her ears.

Next moment a staff officer dashed up the hill—one of the umpires, it seemed.

"Captain Rohan, you are ruled out of action."

"I say, how's that?" cried Rohan in an indignant tone. "I stopped those fellows beautifully."

"So you did, old chap," said the other soothingly, "but your general has pushed on too far without adequate support, and you are out of it for twenty-four hours. Wish I was."

When men get their blood up, even in a sham fight, they don't like to be beaten, and the battery was limbered up for departure with far less dash than had been shown before. But most people would

have thought that Rohan was in wonderful luck, seeing that his sweetheart was at hand to mitigate his hard fate. And breakfast was ready for the prisoner and his captors when they returned to the woods—cutlets and omelettes, prepared by the chef, and fruit from Ambrehurst, delicious in colour and fragrance. François improvised coffee for the whole battery, and in the enthusiasm of the moment compiled a solid but ornamental dish, of which the chief ingredients were beefsteak and fried potatoes, which he dedicated in his own words "A l'Armée Anglaise," and which was speedily, so to say, "out of print" from the kindly way in which it was received.

And Rohan sent his battery to the rear in charge of his subaltern while he performed the duties of cicerone to Lady Gilchurch and Titania, getting them to the best point of view and explaining the tactics of the day as far as he, or anybody else, understood them. Thin lines of smoke creeping here and there, masses of white smoke belching forth from clumps of wood, the occasional glitter of a cavalry charge, with the crackling of musketry and the thunder of ordnance, made up the scene of the battle, of which the defending force seemed to get the best, their fire rolling on with increased volume, while the other subsided into spurts and patches. And then the "bugles sang truce," and stillness came over the scene; the groups of rustics who had gathered here and there dispersed, and there was a general quick march for camp and quarters.

Rohan had found opportunity for a few private words with Titania. Everything had gone on well. The banns had been put up for two Sundays without exciting attention, as far as could be judged, and on the second day of the following week they would be joined together in holy matrimony. The wedding would be in Bolder Church. Wimpole would be there as best man. Would it do to let the Countess into the secret? She was so kind, and it would be better for Titania to have a woman to confide in. But Titania felt the talisman that hung on her bosom turn cold—that had occurred more than once before, and generally when Bensadi or Lady Gilchurch was near at hand. And now the Countess was coming towards them with a smile on her lips, and she put her arm caressingly over Titania's shoulder.

"The evening air is chilly, little one,"

she said. "It is time we retired to our nests. Peace be with you!"

CHAPTER VIII. A PLOT AND ITS VICTIM.

THE caravan journey was coming to an end. They had camped one night near Frensham Pond, surrounded by a strange, wild country, of which the Devil's Jumps, a row of curious protuberances in the surrounding waste, formed a chief and sinister feature. No quantity of villa residences and Elizabethan lodges sprinkled here and there, can overcome the inherent wildness and savagery of scene, and as the shades of evening arise—it is customary but inaccurate to say they descend—and Hindhead stands out against the murky glow of the evening sky with its "murder cross" showing like a finger pointing upwards from the encrimsoned summit, the eerie solemnity of the sight is hardly to be surpassed.

It was here, as night drew on and the features of the scene were becoming blurred and indistinct, that a carriage drew up, the coachman's check-string being violently pulled as some one within perceived signs of the distant encampment. An attendant jumped down and ran to the carriage window. It was Thomas, who had covered his seaman's rig with the long great-coat of the serving man.

"There they are," said Bensadi, pointing out the lights of the encampment. "Contrive to see Lady Gilchurch without alarming your young mistress, and ask her to break the news. Give her this note, which will explain."

Thomas touched his hat, and with a grave face made off across the heath. The carriage then, slowly and by a circuitous route, began to approach the encampment. When it stopped within a hundred yards of the place a female figure left the tents and hastily approached. It was Lady Gilchurch, and Bensadi alighting, held open the carriage door.

"Enter!" he said. "We can converse at our leisure."

Lady Gilchurch obeyed.

"Is Mr. Herondale then so ill?" she asked indifferently.

"He will die," replied Bensadi. "In Mustafa's absence he found the flask which contained the fluid of life, drank too eagerly—he will never regain consciousness."

Lady Gilchurch sighed as if some great load were taken from her bosom.

"Ah! You think that is safety for you; but it is danger for me. They will say I poisoned him. Happily I am prepared. All that belonged to him—or to me rather—the product of his uncle's theft, is safely shipped to our native land. I have the clue to the rest of the treasure. My tribesmen are eagerly awaiting my arrival, and a steamer, the fastest on the seas, is awaiting me in the Solent. But I shall not go alone. The girl who is of the blood of Omar is not to be left to be the prey of Christian dogs!"

"But you will not persuade her to go," said Lady Gilchurch. "She has promised to marry Rohan. They have planned to escape from your control."

"Ah, they have planned!" cried Bensadi contemptuously. "But time presses, and she must leave with me this very night."

"That is impossible!" said Lady Gilchurch firmly. "You must give me time to remove her scruples. You would not use force. At a cry of distress a hundred armed men would spring from the ground."

"Nothing is simpler," said Bensadi calmly. "Here in this silver flask is a cordial which you shall persuade her to drink to fortify her against the fatigues of travelling. Forthwith she will be plunged into a heavenly calm, in which the mental powers will be enthralled. She will follow me blindly, as a fawn follows the doe."

"It is the same drug that you have so long used upon Herondale?"

Bensadi nodded.

"The same which my forefathers have used for generations, when they admitted the faithful to a taste of the joys of Paradise. Fear not; it is only in excess that it kills."

"But I will not do it," cried Lady Gilchurch. "Shall I give up my own daughter to the will of one like you?"

"You shall," replied Bensadi. "I am in possession of your secret. I can put my hand on the proof of your marriage with Herondale. I can show that your marriage with Lord Gilchurch was a fraud, and that your idolised son, instead of being the heir to title and fortune, is but a nameless bastard."

"Stay," cried Lady Gilchurch, "you are too strong for me. What would you have me do? Why would you bring upon me this horrible expiation?"

"I would not," said Bensadi. "I would rather insure you against it. Only do this little thing for me. The girl will live to bless you for it."

Lady Gilchurch shook her head and shuddered.

"It is a crime, say what you will—a base, unnatural crime. But I am yours, Bensadi. Only show me how to save my son."

"That is easy enough," replied Bensadi. "Obey me; that is sufficient. No living soul but I or Herondale could prove your identity with the woman he married. He cannot and I will not—if you obey."

"Then 'give me the flask," cried Lady Gilchurch desperately.

Half an hour after this the carriage was drawn up by the caravan camp, luggage packed on the roof, lamps lighted, and the horses pawing impatiently in their haste to be moving.

And then Titania appeared, leaning on Bensadi's arm, and looking about her with strange, wondering eyes. Lady Gilchurch followed, crushing back her remorse and assuming a look of sympathetic sorrow. Osmond was there too, looking at his late companion with undisguised concern.

"Mother," he said, "she is not fit to travel. She shall not go to-night."

"Hush!" said Lady Gilchurch impatiently; "she is only upset by her father's illness. She will be all right presently."

Just at this moment a scream was heard from the camp, and Cobweb came forth, having only just heard that her mistress was going and she to be left behind; an arrangement she indignantly repudiated.

"Stand back, daughter of Satan," cried Bensadi; but Cobweb sprang into the carriage after her mistress, whose knees she embraced.

Bensadi would have dragged her out, but Lady Gilchurch interfered.

"No, she must go," she said, and Bensadi did not further dispute the matter, but jumped into the carriage, which speedily was lost to sight in the gloom.

CHAPTER IX. IN THE BAY OF BISCAY.

MR. HERONDALE was dead. Captain Rohan heard the news from his servant on the very morning that was to have witnessed his wedding to Titania. He had been at Bolder Hatch the night before and had found the household in great consternation on account of its master's dangerous state. A local doctor had been called in, who had considered that the symptoms were altogether abnormal. Bensadi had gone to fetch Miss Herondale, who was away gipsying, but they ought to

have returned long ago, for Thomas, who had been charged with bringing home Rollo and Miss Herondale's miscellaneous belongings, had arrived the night before, and the others had started before him. All this had given Rohan a good deal of uneasiness. Still, the travellers might have missed a train, and Sunday travelling is embarrassed by a meagre time bill. There was only an early morning train and a late night one, and both of these Rohan met, but without hearing anything of Titania. He telegraphed to Mrs. Wimpole to come over at once so that Titania might have a friend to be with her, and, in fact, Mrs. Wimpole had arrived that very morning just in time to hear of the death of Herondale; but no Titania.

It was all very perplexing, indeed alarming, the Bensadi element being taken into consideration; and now suspicious details began to appear. Mustafa was gone, many of the valuable enamels and vases which had adorned Mr. Herondale's rooms had been removed. Communications with Mr. Herondale's London bankers revealed the fact that Mr. Herondale had withdrawn all his securities from their charge and closed his account some time since. The aspect of affairs was now so serious that the police were called in, and enquiries made at all stations on the line of route. It turned out that a foreign gentleman, a young lady, and a black servant had arrived at Portsmouth by the last train, and had taken a cab to South-sea Pier, where a boat was waiting to take them on board some vessel. There was no other clue. The coastguard men had noticed a long, low steamer with two funnels, which was lying a good way out, even beyond the Nab, and from which a boat came in the dusk with a crew of darkies. But in the morning she was gone and nothing more was known of her.

There was an inquest on Mr. Herondale's body, and an open verdict returned. The medical evidence showed that he had died of narcotic poisoning, but there was no evidence beyond that. Here, however, Lord Gilchurch came upon the scene and sought an interview with Captain Rohan. It was a painful family affair he had to reveal, but he thought he could read the riddle of Bensadi. He was obliged to own that Lady Gilchurch had once been the mistress of Herondale, the sculptor, and the mother of Titania; that he had persuaded her to go off with him, but that

he had married her before the birth of Osmond, and that therefore the title of the latter to succeed him was inexpugnable. Now Bensadi and Lady Gilchurch, if not brother and sister, anyhow were of the same race, and had been captured by the Sultan of Morocco when he defeated and took prisoner the rebel Kaid and Shereef Omar. Eventually, about thirty years ago, as we have heard, they were sold as slaves in the market at Fez and purchased for Sir Thomas Herondale, who had agents there to buy up Moorish curios. It was from the treasure of the vanquished Omar that Sir Thomas, it will be remembered, carved out his splendid fortune, which now Bensadi had succeeded in carrying back to Morocco, for thither he had gone, no doubt. Already there were rumours of disturbances there. Some of the tribes had risen, and were found to be well supplied with arms of the latest and best, and they were said to be expecting the arrival of a commander of the faith and a descendant of Omar to lead them on to victory. Putting all these things together, Lord Gilchurch thought that it was pretty plain that Bensadi was out of everybody's reach. And as for Titania, she must be held to have accompanied him willingly. She had left with Bensadi, fully knowing his designs, that was quite evident, and the course that approved itself to any rational judgement was to let the whole affair pass into complete oblivion.

But Rohan refused to believe that Titania had proved so faithless and so feeble in resolve. Yet what could he do, without any clue to guide him, or any certain proof that the girl had been carried off against her will? But in the darkness of his perplexity a gleam of light appeared. Soon after Lord Gilchurch had departed a fisherman made his appearance, who hailed from Mudford, and who knew Miss Herondale, and even Captain Rohan by sight; and he had happened to be on Southsea Pier on business of his own, and seeing a boat lying there waiting for somebody, and manned by a lot of darkies, he kept an eye upon the craft. Well, a cab arrived, and a lady and gentleman got out, their luggage was put on board the boat, the lady standing on one side while the gentleman gave directions. And then he saw that the lady was Miss Herondale. She took no notice of anything; indeed, she seemed dazed like or as if stupefied, but on his

touching his hat to her a sudden flash of recognition seemed to come over her. She made a step towards him, and thrust something into his hand. "For Rohan," she whispered in a strangely altered voice, and with a look that gave the fisherman quite a fright; and then the gentleman took her by the hand, and she let him hand her into the boat just like a lamb. And the fisherman had made his way to Christchurch as soon as he could to find Captain Rohan and give him the object in question. It was poor Titania's talisman, hanging from the silken cord just as she had taken it from her neck. The sight of it appealed strongly to Rohan's feelings. He knew what value she attached to it, and there seemed in its transmission a mute appeal to him for help. And Titania had told him, as it happened, the way in which she became possessed of her charm, and how it had once belonged to Sir Thomas Herondale, and also of the inscription and Dr. Wimpole's translation thereof; and these things went to confirm Lord Gilchurch's strange revelations.

And assuming that Bensadi had taken refuge among his own tribesmen, where, in what direction, was he to be sought? The answer was not difficult. The revolted Kaid Omar had been the chief of a Kabyle tribe, who occupied the country on the banks of the chief river of the Atlantic seaboard, the Sebou, which is navigable as high as Fez, but which is practically closed to commerce owing to the stirring nature of the tribes among whom it passes. There is no port at the mouth of the river, but numerous creeks and lagoons would afford shelter to a steamer of light draught, that might, were the coast population as enterprising as of yore, have rivalled the exploits of the once dreaded Barbary corsairs.

Having once fixed the quarter in which researches should be made, Rohan lost no time in elaborate preparations. He was entitled to three months' leave before taking up his appointment at Gibraltar, and to an advance of three months' pay, which was equally needful. And having settled all his worldly affairs, he started at once for Southampton, intending to take the first steamer for Gibraltar, and so to Tangier by the local service. But in the docks he found a smart and fast trading steamer that was going direct to Tangier with a miscellaneous cargo. The captain was a fine, open-hearted sailor,

who seemed to know the Moors and Berbers, and the hundred and one mixed tribes in Morocco, as well as he did his own countrymen. And when he heard the purpose of Captain Rohan's voyage, he insisted on his taking a free passage, except for his share of the messing expenses. This was a fortunate beginning of a formidable undertaking, a good fortune which poor Titania would have ascribed to the working of the talisman.

Such a charm, however, may rule the planet, but it cannot rule the waves; yet the voyage at first was calm and prosperous. The pilot was dropped at St. Catherine's Point; Ushant was made out at night by its revolving light; the stormy Bay of Biscay proved unusually mild; the light from Cape Finisterre greeted the mariners, who had been a day and a night without sight of land; and without sighting Cape St. Vincent, the captain judged that he had rounded it, and was making straight for his port, when there came roaring down from the Gut of Gibraltar such a terrible gale that the steamer was forced to run before it, unable to make head against the wild seas that threatened to engulf her. The sky was overspread with a sullen kind of pallor, the sea, grey and gloomy, rose in huge frothing waves, of which the crests, driven by the roaring wind, formed a cutting drift, that bit and stung like whip-lashes. The night was still worse. The captain, ignorant of his exact position and dreading a lee shore, tried to wear the ship and heave-to, but in the trial, the engines going full speed with a high pressure of steam, one of the steam-pipes burst, and the engines were practically disabled. Then the steamer was driven before the gale, her decks swept by huge seas, swamping the engine-room and putting out the fires. It was now a question whether the ship would founder at sea, or be driven upon the African coast and broken up in the surf.

The latter fate seemed imminent, as a glimpse of moonlight showed a long, low coast at hand, bare and sandy except where scattered palm-trees, here and there, were bending before the blast. The shock of touching ground sent everybody off their feet, as the captain, for a last chance, sang out to let go the anchor. Next moment, however, the boat was free again. The anchor was let go, it held, and the steamer was brought up in comparatively

smooth water. And then, as if by magic, a complete change came over the scene. The gale went roaring off, a complete calm succeeded, and while heavy seas still showed their white crests in the moonlight out at sea, where the vessel lay was now like a placid lake. Evidently the boat had just touched the bar of some river estuary, and was now lying embayed between curving shores, the moonlight showing thick clumps of trees, with a dark line of cultivated fields bordering on glittering sand-hills. But the sight of a long, low steamer with two funnels, lying in a sheltered creek, excited some surprise and a little uneasiness in the captain's mind. From the general view of the coast line as marked down in the charts, the captain was convinced that the estuary was that of the Sebou, marked as dangerous with shifting sands, and bordered by ferocious, inhospitable tribes.

And thus the captain was anxious to put out to sea as soon as he could, but the time of high water passed, and the defect in the engines was still not made good, and another twelve hours must elapse before the boat could pass the harbour bar. And this was Captain Rohan's opportunity. Here he would be put ashore, for at this point he was actually in contact with what might be called Bensadi's country, and the scene of those disturbances which his enterprise had occasioned. Luckily there was a negro hand on board who knew the country, and as he was willing to act as guide, the captain consented to spare him, although strongly dissuading Rohan from the undertaking; but Rohan having made up his mind, the good mariner gave him every possible assistance. He rigged him out with clothes of native pattern, supplied him with an assortment of cutlery, which was to be his stock in trade, for Rohan was to make-believe as a pedlar, or itinerant trader, while the black acted as his servant. Fortunately, Rohan, having served a while at Gibraltar, had acquired, in sporting excursions on the opposite coast, a knowledge of the Hispano-Moorish dialect which is current among the mixed populations. As for his complexion, there are golden-haired, blue-eyed people among the Moors, descendants, perhaps, of a Gothic race who traversed, if they did not permanently occupy, the country.

To satisfy curiosity, as well as possibly to gain intelligence, a visit was paid to the

steamer with two funnels which was lying, apparently deserted, in a neighbouring creek. As they approached they were hailed by an English voice from one of the port-holes. It was the engineer of the steamer, who warned them not to come too near, for there was a Moorish guard on board, mostly asleep, but who when roused would fire recklessly around. He and his two mates, the firemen, were not exactly prisoners, and did not want to get away, for they were well paid and well treated. But it was a queer job they were on. They had brought a big swell of an Arab from England, with a young lady, who was to be married to him in a fortnight's time, when there was to be a big feast up the country, that all the bloomin' niggers were going to be at.

At this point one of the Moorish guards awoke, and pointed a rifle threateningly at the boat's crew, who thought it best to sheer off, no further molestation being offered. But Rohan had heard enough to guide him in his plans, and added to his stock a collection of showy Birmingham jewellery, such as was likely to be in demand on festive occasions. And he would make his way to the marriage feast, an uninvited guest, trusting to the good fortune which had hitherto favoured him for some means of rescuing Titania.

A boat took Rohan's packages ashore and then returned for him and Muley, his negro boy. Rohan shook the captain warmly by the hand, who promised to look out for him in Tangler, but who evidently did not expect to see his face again. The engineer of the steamer had now mastered the leak in the steam-pipe, and as soon as the adventurers were landed they heard the rattle of the anchor chain, and saw the steamer presently put out to sea.

CHAPTER X. THE TREASURE CHAMBER.

ROHAN'S progress across the disturbed country of the revolted tribes, dangerous as it was, did not prove difficult. The country was lovely, resembling English landscape, with the added charm of sub-tropical vegetation. In the villages the inhabitants, although often surly and suspicious, were not unwilling to trade, and the women especially flocked about Rohan eager to examine his wares and chatter and gossip over the trinkets that he showed them. It was only necessary to propitiate the scheik, or head man, with a few silver

dollars to obtain his protection over the whole of his district. Parties of fighting men on one side or the other would have held such protection lightly enough, but these they generally had notice of, and managed to avoid. Muley proved an excellent fellow, and having gone through the ceremony of swearing fealty to his master over the skin of a black ram, might be relied upon to the death. With a couple of good mules they travelled at a speed of twelve or fourteen miles a day, and before long they were close to the forest regions that clothed the bases of the mysterious Atlas range, which they had kept in view from the first. Among these it was known that the new Shereef had pitched his camp. Hitherto there had been more talking than fighting among the Arab tribes, but they were all on the swarm, fierce and headstrong, and ready to shed anybody's blood on the slightest provocation.

To escape these fighting men, who would have plundered them of everything, and probably cut them down with their scimitars or used them as targets for rifle practice, Rohan and Muley took everywhere their way through the forest, by paths only known to natives of the district. And here again Rohan was continually reminded of English forest scenery. Ancient tumuli, too, crowned the hills, and there were here and there to be found mysterious circles, like that of Bedgebury Ring, with the long monolith in the centre, but in most cases still standing on end.

One evening the travellers arrived at a summit where the camp of the Shereef lay in full view. Here stood the white tents with gay streamers fluttering in the breeze, and two richly-decorated pavilions, which, according to Muley, were destined for the use of the bride and bridegroom. Horses were picketed here and there, and dusky horsemen in white bernouses were arriving or departing. On a piece of level sward a number of young men on horseback were engaged in martial exercises. Outside the tents, on glowing charcoal fires, women and slaves were preparing the evening meal, and as sunset fell the call of the muezzin was heard in its plaintive charm, and the whole population of the camp turned their faces towards Meccah, and for a few minutes were engaged in silent prayer.

Effective as this might have been as an operatic scene, its reality fell with chilling effect on one of the observers. The odds

against him were too great. And how should he enter into the camp of his enemy—as a spy or as an assassin? No, his soldier's blood revolted at the thought. And then he touched the talisman, and forthwith the thought of what Titania was enduring nerved him afresh. And then Muley spoke.

"Master, I will go down into the camp with a basket of trinkets, and I will say they are a gift for the bride. And then they will bring me to her. But if I cannot get speech of her, is there any jewel you can place among the trinkets that she will surely know as yours?"

Ah, yes, was there not the talisman?

That was an excellent plan of Muley's. He would pass in and out of the camp without exciting suspicion. With the early morning light Muley departed on his mission; it was nearly noon before he returned, his black face mantling with smiles. He brought provisions, which were sorely needed; he brought a purse of gold which the beautiful maiden had given him in acknowledgement of his presents. The maiden was strictly watched, and he could not get speech with her, but she had passed by him, and as she passed she repeated certain cabalistic words which he had repeated to himself ever since, till in the excitement of telling the story he had forgotten them!

Rohan looked at the negro in blank despair, whose eyes almost rolled out of his head, while perspiration covered his forehead, in his efforts to recall the charmed words. At last he gasped out:

"Intitanya," and then he stopped; he could do no more. Rohan, turning the sounds over in his mind, grappling the problem with every faculty stretched, memory, imagination, the love he bore the girl, which surely now should fertilise his brain, suddenly shouted out:

"In Titania's Bower."

The negro laughed aloud, a long, ringing laugh.

"Dat's it, master!"

Yes, Rohan's understanding had been fertilised, he remembered that sweet, stolen meeting in the Ring that had been known as Titania's Bower. The hour, it was sunset; the place—why, surely in the immediate neighbourhood of the camp there was just such another ring as that in the New Forest. He was as sure of it as if he had seen it, and when he described the place to Muley, the negro laughed aloud again. Yes, he knew the place well,

and would take the master there right away. They skirted the camp, keeping well out of sight, till they arrived at the opposite side, which was quieter, being appropriated to the wives of the chiefs, and came nearer the edge of the forest. And here they came upon a scene which startled Rohan by its resemblance to a similar place in Hampshire. There were the encircling trees, the ring of turf, and even the central stone, and like that at Bedgebury broken into three pieces. Here Rohan would stay till he met Titania; sooner or later they would meet, and death only should part them.

As sunset approached there was a noise of chattering voices in the woods; the chief Arab ladies and their attendants had come out to enjoy the fresh evening air and the scent of the fragrant shrubs.

"Ah, do not go there," cried one, as a female form appeared in the mystic ring; "it is haunted by goblins."

But the figure in white advanced. It was Titania, and Rohan clasped her in his arms.

But there was not a moment to lose. The mules were at hand, and the contents of their pack-saddles were scattered on the ground. One mule for Titania, one for Cobweb, who now appeared smiling and yet shivering with fright. But just as these preparations were completed, there was a laughing, screaming stampede among the women, and the white bernouses of perhaps a hundred Arab horsemen surrounded the skirts of the wood. There was nothing for it but to await events, for the way of retreat was now cut off. Rohan satisfied himself that his revolver was ready for action. The negro threw himself upon his face, and sinuously crept among the bushes.

"Yes, he was right to save his skin, poor fellow," said Rohan.

Out of the troop of horsemen rode forth a dignified figure in ample turban and voluminous white garments; yet it was easy to recognise Bensadi, although he looked every inch the chief and patriarch. He alighted at the margin of the circle, and none of his attendants followed him beyond that line. Bensadi advanced to the central stone, carrying in his hand a pan of incense, which he lighted with a glowing piece of charcoal, so that in a few moments a dense but fragrant smoke enveloped him, and he was quite hidden from his attendants, although Rohan could dimly see his motions. Laying aside his

scimitar, Bensadi stooped towards the middle fragment of the stone, and with the greatest apparent ease turned it over. An opening was revealed beneath, into which Bensadi was about to descend, when suddenly through the vapour was seen the flash of steel, and Bensadi fell forward on his face.

Next moment Muley crept up to his master, wiping the jewelled scimitar on the grass.

"Muley do dat for his master," he said grimly. "Now we get along."

The confusion and uproar of the moment favoured their escape, they regained the other side of the camp unobserved, and pushing quickly through tangled forest paths, soon left the camp far behind them. Yet the real perils of the march had only just commenced. Muley and Rohan had agreed that the route to Tangier was hopeless. In that direction would the pursuers, and the avengers of blood, naturally flock; and that way there were no forest tracts to conceal their flight. But as they approached the coast, following the route to the mouth of the river Sebou, they found that the whole country had been roused in pursuit of them.

Yet the country was wide, and thanks to Muley's knowledge of localities, the fugitives contrived to elude the clouds of white-robed horsemen who galloped here and there. But in crossing the sandy plain which stretched between the hills and the coast, they were marked down by some flying scout, and soon surrounded by a cordon of horsemen, who gradually closed in upon them. Luckily night fell upon the scene before the operation was completed, and fearful of losing their victims in the darkness, the Arabs contented themselves with lighting fires all round and keeping watch all night long.

Hopeless indeed and miserable seemed the lot of the fugitives. The morning light would reveal them to their pursuers. Titania would have had Rohan promise to shoot her, rather than she should fall into the hands of the Arabs; but Rohan would not promise. They had hoped to secure a native boat and put out for Tangier; but now that was impossible; every boat had been impounded. Keeping as far as possible from the line of fires that encompassed them, they came down to the water's edge and gazed hopelessly at the river and the starlit sky, when one of them perceived a faint glow in the water. It was a light from one of the port-holes of a steamer

which had hitherto been concealed from them by the sand-hills. The long, low steamer with two funnels was still lying there.

"This is my business," said Rohan, holding back Muley, who was about to plunge into the river. He kissed Titania, grasped the hands of Muley and Cobweb, and let himself softly glide into the water.

The others watched intently from the bank; not a sound did they hear. If a ripple glittered in the starlight they started and shivered. Hours seemed to pass, and yet not more than twenty minutes had elapsed when the keel of a boat grated against the shore.

"By God's help we are saved," whispered Rohan as he helped the others on board.

In a few words he told them what had happened. The Moorish guard he had found asleep on the settees in the captain's cabin. He had fastened them in and liberated the three Englishmen who had been battened down in the hold. These were now mounting guard over the sleeping guard. In a few moments the rest were all safely on board. The engine fires were lighted, steam was getting up. In three hours the tide would be at the full and the boat might start. But in three hours also it would be sunrise.

The sun rose gloriously out of the ocean, which was almost calm and of deep cerulean hue. It disclosed the cordon of horsemen, who, having performed their devotions, sprang to their saddles and began skilfully to close in upon the sand-hills. The first roar of escaping steam as the boat began to move must have showed them their mistake. A group of chiefs gathered in consultation, and then there was a general gallop towards the most outlying promontory. The channel here was narrow—not a hundred yards across. The steamer would have to run the gauntlet of fire.

Muley was at the wheel, which was on the enclosed conning bridge in the centre of the ship. Rohan covered him with his person, for Muley was now the one vital point for the ship's safety. Titania insisted also in being on the bridge. She would share the others' danger. She had charge of the engine-room indicator, and her first signal was "Full steam ahead!" The craft was one of the racers of the seas, built by a celebrated firm, with a guaranteed speed of thirty miles an hour. The foam rushed from her cutwater in a mighty fountain as she ran for the narrow channel

amid the shrieks, yells, and curses of the Arabs on shore.

Hardly would any on deck have escaped the shower of bullets had it not been for an ingenious device of Muley's. There was a steering-wheel in the once usual place in the stern, to be used if the other tackle broke down, and against this Muley had rigged up a dummy, who stood very naturally by the wheel. The Arabs, judging rightly that if they killed the steersman the steamer would probably run aground, directed their chief fire upon the dummy, knocking the dust out of his coat in dozens of bullet-holes. Rohan was grazed by a bullet. None of the others were touched. And once on the open sea they were only three days from home.

CHAPTER XI. QUEEN OF THE FOREST.

SOFT autumnal sunshine was resting upon the forest slopes and on the square ivy-covered tower of Bolder Church. The churchyard path had been hastily strewn with flowers and fragrant twigs, and a group of villagers were assembled on either side of the porch to see the bridal procession pass out. That Miss Herondale was to marry Captain Rohan had for some time been known all over the forest; but the ceremony had been shorn of all its usual adornments owing to the recent death of Titania's father. Yet was the function graced by the presence of Lord and Lady Gilchurch, and their only son Lord Camlan, who were not the least interested spectators of the ceremony.

"You don't mind, Osmond," said Titania, when the ceremony was over, as the whole party stood together about the entrance to the little side chapel, where surplices were hung and the registers were kept, "and we shall be just as good chums as ever!"

Osmond was not quite sure, feeling indeed a little sore about the matter altogether. And as for Lady Gilchurch, she seemed to be fairly overcome with agitation, and when Titania offered her cheek to be kissed, my lady looked as pale as a ghost.

"Is it peace?" she asked in a hollow whisper.

"Yes, and forgiveness," replied Titania.

When Lord Gilchurch had signed as one of the witnesses, the clerk of the church remarked that, although they had not many such distinguished names to boast of, yet the name of Herondale occurred in the register just eighteen years before.

"Oh, let me look," said Titania; and there she saw her father's name coupled with another almost illegible. "Look, Bertie," she said to her husband, and Lord Gilchurch was also fumbling for his eye-glasses to see what the entry might be. At that moment Titania caught a glance from Lady Gilchurch so terror-stricken and imploring, that Titania dropped the volume, which fell with a great crash on the floor. But Captain Rohan had caught sight of the entry, and it had given him extreme delight. Bensadi had lied to him when he had said that Titania was only the natural daughter of Mr. Herondale.

As soon as the bride and bridegroom had driven off, the Gilchurch carriage went too, but not in the same direction. Lady Gilchurch had found that the air of Ambrehurst did not agree with her, although it had proved so beneficial to her son, and now she starts on a lengthened tour, which is to embrace the Rocky Mountains and the Pacific coast of America. Sooner than allow herself to be identified as the woman who married Stanley Herondale, and who became the mother of Titania, Lady Gilchurch will remain for ever exiled from the world in which she has moved, and separated from the son for whose sake she was ready to sin and to suffer.

As soon as Captain Rohan and Titania reached Bolder Hatch, they found that they were not to be let off so quietly as they had expected. The white gate had been taken off its hinges and replaced by a triumphal arch in green boughs, and wreaths of ivy adorned the time-worn gateway. And the melancholy-looking board, which had for some weeks past been stuck there announcing that this desirable property was for sale, "by order of the mortgagees," had now been split up into fragments as part of the materials for a bonfire, which was to be presently lit in honour of the wedding.

For it was now an open secret that Miss Herondale—as was—had recovered a considerable part of her father's fortune. For the steamer with the double funnels, having exhausted her coal on the run home, it was found that concealed in the coal bunkers were a number of boxes of specie, just as they had been forwarded from the Bank of England on Mr. Herondale's order. Doubtless Joseph Bensadi had thought it best to provide himself with the means of retreat, in case he found his position among

his tribesmen growing dangerous. Indeed, it may be doubted whether he had not the intention of making his escape so soon as he had possessed himself of the contents of the treasure chamber, of which Sir Thomas Herondale had only carried off a fraction.

The late Sir Thomas's papers, now in Titania's possession, indicate clearly enough the exact position of Omar's treasure, and the chamber which had been built for it beneath the secret shrine of the imaum—in the centre of the ring of turf in the distant forests of Morocco. And there, doubtless, it still exists, but whether plundered or intact it is impossible to say.

But no long stay was to be made at Bolder Hatch. Everything was to be left untouched, said Titania, till she came back. Thomas was to exercise the horses, and see that the "Gem" was painted, caulked, and made seaworthy for her next voyage. The double-funnelled monster that had so nearly caught her was to be sold. For now they were going, the newly married pair, to make a leisurely tour by way of France and the Mediterranean towards Gibraltar, where Captain Rohan was to take up his appointment. But only for three years; and then they would come back to the Forest for evermore.

"Ah, yes, my dear little lady, you must come back to us," cried Sidonia—now Mrs. Spot. "The forest won't be the forest without you. We've crowned you the queen of it now, my dear," and Sidonia threw into the open carriage a chaplet of forest leaves jewelled with berries just coloured by the sun of autumn.

The hardy foresters cheered; Muley and Cobweb on the back seat smiled back approvingly; Thomas whipped up his horses, and away they went "over the hills and far away."

AUTUMN LEAVES.

A DESPERADO OF THE CHILTERN HILLS.

AFTER all, it was Nan's "man of the mountains" who snapped a coil of unscrupulous revenge, and Nan and another were the gainers.

"What could I do but help him, poacher and vagabond though he is? You could not leave him to lie up there, in pain and helpless, till somebody found him next morning?"

"Certainly not. I expect any of us would have done the same."

Nan Covington rewarded the speaker with a flash from her eloquent eyes. He thought he had never seen her look so pretty as when, with the rose-red colour on her cheeks and stealing into her low, broad brow, she steadfastly declined to bear the title of "Donna Qaixote."

It was a simple incident in one of those wide, free rambles which are a feature of life in an English country house. Nan and her mother were guests at Terrick Manor. A party had gone out riding on the downs. Nan was a laggard, pausing at the highest points to drink in the beauty of the fair, autumn-hued landscape that stretched like a panorama below these heights of the Chilterns. She had been introduced to a wholly new Bucks wonderland, and marvelled that people in London knew so little of what was very near them. Taking a specially steep "bit" to rejoin her friends by a short cut—for it must be confessed that Nan was a random horsewoman—she had found a big, hulking fellow with a sprained ankle. A block of earth had been dislodged, and man and mould had crashed many yards together. Nan's pity offered aid, though he never asked it. She dismounted and gave him a girlish arm to lean upon, and somehow he had reached the track hard by, and then Nan walked away to some cottages half a mile distant, and ensured for him more stalwart assistance.

"For my arm will be stiff for a week," she said, laughing as she told the story.

Nan was assured that she had befriended the greatest scoundrel in the district—the leader of a gang of hillside ruffians, who were always ready for a midnight visit to the preserves of Terrick Manor.

"That's Black Sam Pewsey to a T," said Squire Milne, as Nan described the sufferer.

Mrs. Covington was thereupon duly indignant.

"Nan does the strangest things!" she said.

And only Captain Fairlie had cared to controvert the theory that Nan was eccentric. The girl was grateful, and there was henceforth a favour for the latest comer which was like strong wine to a fainting man.

It was a surprise to Captain Fairlie to meet Nan here. They were old acquaintances of a furlough spent in Jersey. Into one heart love had consciously come then.

But he was poor, and had a hazy outlook, and Nan was old Colonel Covington's niece and heiress. Jim Fairlie recognised the barrier. If he had been blind, the tart-tongued dowager who snubbed Nan and him impartially would soon have pointed it out.

Since then he had won his step in the Soudan, and wealth had come in his way from a maternal kinsman long lost sight of amongst Australian sheep-folds. But he had been an exile in the desert, and expected that Nan was married long since. The frank, vivacious girls with money are always picked up.

Captain Fairlie came home on a steamer with Cecil Milne, a wounded subaltern.

"You'll run down to Terrick Manor? It's fresh ground to you?"

"Yes, entirely."

"Then promise to come. You won't find us deadly dull. The governor always has a house party in the autumn, and I'll guarantee you sensations in pretty faces."

The older man had smiled rather wanly at that. A fortune is a fortune at any time, but it may come too late, and carry chagrin upon its wings. He was rich now; but there was only one girl's face passing fair to him. Where was Nan?

No music could have thrilled him as the soft, rich voice, with the faint suspicion of distance, did when he arrived at Terrick Manor.

"We are ancient friends, I think, Captain Fairlie."

Yes, and they got on capitally together now, until a whisper was carried to the soldier's ears which stifled his new hopes.

"Miss Covington is so gay already that one wonders how her spirits can be higher when Mr. Stanton arrives," said a dry, wizened little woman, who perhaps saw a dangerous drama unfolding in these perpetual picnics.

"Mr. Stanton?" repeated the listener she had caught in a corner.

"Yes; I can't tell you who he is; nobody seems to know much about him—except Mrs. Covington. He is to marry Miss Covington, you know. I believe they met abroad—Baden-Baden, or some of those places. I hear he is very rich, and that Mrs. Covington thinks it a grand match for Nan. But we shall see—those of us who stay. He joins us in a fortnight."

How soon a lover's house of cards stands in fine and flowing outline on the table-land of fancy; how soon it is in ruins! The light faded out of Captain Fairlie's sky. His past pessimism was justified.

Good luck in the common view had visited him, but every boon it brought was tithed by a bitter chagrin.

He talked of going, but he did not go. For one thing Cecil Milne would not hear of it; and for another he was a lonely man, and here was a point of warmth and brightness. Captain Fairlie had no waiting home circle to go to. Moreover, he was pleased with his refuge in these "Chiltern Hundreds" of historic fame.

That Bucks was a charming sylvan county he was vaguely aware before. But he had no idea of the beauty of the woodlands in their golden autumn dress, of the fine air and far distances of the great rolling crests which sweep round from Aston Hills on the west side of Tring to Whiteleaf Cross at Risborough, or of the hundred quaintnesses of the sequestered, old-world villages. It was all unhackneyed, naïve, delightful. He stood on Velvet Lawn, by the flagstaff, and his eye ranged over the rich pastures of the whole vale of Aylesbury, and away to the west towards the pleasant plains of Oxford. Scarcely a day passed without his stumbling on a new vista of leafy loveliness, or a fresh vantage-ground from which to study a unique blending of the finest features of the softer British scenery.

Captain Fairlie was growing curious to see Nan's accepted lover. It argued indifference that day after day he should disappoint expectation. The business affairs in Yorkshire that were understood to be keeping him were probably the Doncaster races. But startling events were, first, to divert every one's thoughts from the loiterer, and then to bring them back to him when the thing seemed least likely.

There was a burglary at Terrick Manor, and Mrs. Covington lost the brilliants which she always carried with her on her rural campaigns. They were worth a large sum of money, though not equivalent, as she loudly asserted, to the purchase price of the Manor estate. It was a disaster that made her frantic, and Nan trembled with shame at her unjust accusations of carelessness, and at the reckless insinuations in which she indulged.

"Somebody on the spot must have had a hand in it," she said angrily, "somebody who saw me wearing them, and took good care to find out which was my room and where I locked them up. It's a vile plot, with one thread here in the house. I feel sure of it."

But the visitors were nearly all gone now. Squire Milne's remaining guests were only Miss Parks and Captain Fairlie, Nan, and Mrs. Covington herself. And there was not a servant on the place for whose integrity the Squire would not have answered with his own. He did not choose the people about him at random or change them for a whim. They were old retainers.

These facts made Mrs. Covington's assertion seem absurd to him. He dealt with it in a dignified, courteous way which Nan, at least, appreciated.

"I am very sorry it has happened under my roof," he said; "that is a misfortune which I shall feel, madam, in its own degree as much as you will feel yours. My family share these sentiments. But I submit that you have no evidence whatever for a charge which, if it means anything, must mean that perhaps my son Cecil has given information to the rogues, or that I am a conspirator, or that some one quite as little likely in my opinion to do these things is guilty. I do not believe that."

Mrs. Covington had the grace to be momentarily abashed.

"Of course, that is nonsense," she muttered, "I never said so. But it is a dreadful thing, a shameful thing; and I suppose it is true that it has happened? I wish it were not. The thieves knew where to go. If they were not put up to it, how came they to guess that there was such a chance? That is what I ask, and what nobody answers."

"In the absence of a clue it cannot be answered," remarked Captain Fairlie.

The irate woman turned upon him.

"You went away directly it came out that I was robbed. Perhaps you fancy I am blind, Captain Fairlie. You were never more mistaken in your life. I have seen a great deal. I feel inclined to ask if you are certain that no clue is forthcoming. What are your ideas about it? Where did you go to?"

When Mrs. Covington commenced she was consciously striking wild blows. It was an ebullition of resentment without aim or meaning, except to sting the subject of the assault. But it was a fact that she was on the whole a capable observer, and she soon noticed that her charge of withdrawal told. Captain Fairlie looked confused. By sheer instinct she brought her hints to a head, and confronted him with a direct question.

His bronzed face had annoyance visibly written in its lines. Even Nan, who with impatient disgust had come over to him from her mother's side and whispered pitifully, "Please take no notice," even Nan wondered at the dark, preoccupied countenance. And his answer seemed weak and a shuffle.

"I went into Terrick. There was nothing to gain by my staying. If there had been I would have stayed."

Cecil Milne, who was nearly strong again, gazed at his friend curiously. Did he not understand that this mad old dowager had impugned his honour?

The foe caught at the quibble and exposed it. She was seriously coming to believe that Captain Fairlie was mixed up in the robbery, preposterous as the notion seemed to every one else in the group.

"Ob, indeed! You had not interest enough in the matter to join in the investigation? I think, sir, that will seem strange to all here."

Squire Milne interrupted.

"I must ask you to remember, Mrs. Covington, that Captain Fairlie is my guest," he said significantly. "Probably on reflection you will agree that this has gone far enough."

"No; I shall not think so until I have back what I have lost. And I am glad that Mr. Stanton will be here this afternoon. I shall put it all into his hands—all; do you hear, Captain Fairlie?"

He bowed gravely. His reserve continued, and was inexplicable to Cecil Milne, and to Nan.

It was supposed that Mrs. Covington's room in the west wing of the Manor had been surreptitiously entered late on the previous evening. She had gone along a corridor after retiring and stayed nearly an hour with Nan, persuading the girl to fix a date almost immediately for her marriage. Mr. Stanton pressed for this in a letter Nan had received, and which also stated that he might be expected on the morrow. The theory which seemed to have least difficulties was that the thief had come in through a window in a deep oriel of the corridor, and had escaped the same way. Access to this from below was easy by reason of a mass of climbing ivy plants—a natural ladder was provided for nimble feet—and this window was found forced.

The police accepted this hypothesis and were working upon it, examining, with a great show of importance, the outdoor staff

of the Manor, and seeking for the trail of any suspicious prowler who might have been seen in the locality. Their results so far were not made public.

At four o'clock a carriage went to the station to meet Mr. Stanton. Nan was inside. Heavy rain had fallen, and the September air was sharp and fresh. The girl had a grey wrap round her shoulders. It suited her perfectly, but it was a pallid, anxious face that Captain Fairlie met by accident. Nan had no need, surely, to wear the old hateful mask here, where spectators were only the country people. She was letting all the sad foreboding of her heart steal into her eyes when at the very cottages from which she had once secured assistance for the poacher, Pewsy, she passed Captain Fairlie. He knew where she was going, and her hopeless face was a revelation to him. The strange thing was that his own brightened proportionally. He was standing a yard or two from the curve of the road, on a rustic path leading to a clump of the magnificent beeches with which Bucks abounds. The girl saw with a start that his companion was the man whom Squire Milne called Black Sam, and that there was gold on Sam's palm. It was very distantly that she returned the soldier's salute. For the first time she had a sharp doubt whether Captain Fairlie was a man of honour. What legitimate relations could he have with one who was almost an outlaw—certainly an Ishmael of the Chilterns? It was one thing to aid Black Sam in distress and in ignorance of his character. She would do that again. It was another thing to bribe him for perhaps a lawless act. Were her mother's brilliants involved? Even this bright, beautiful Bucks world seemed grey, and barren of peace and joy, to Nan at that moment. Then she rebuked herself for the thought.

Mr. Eugene Stanton was introduced to a broken and dispirited party. Nan, who was nervously watching, fancied that there was a gleam of contempt, and something else that she could not fathom, in Captain Fairlie's eyes. Could it be triumph? How should that have any place? Was not the victory Mr. Stanton's by her own word of surrender?

A conference about the burglary was soon held apart. It was interrupted by the announcement of a capture.

"Black Sam Pewsy and his son are in custody," was the information brought in by Cecil Milne.

The Squire shook his head solemnly at Nan. The girl was the old man's favourite, though he was learning to detest her mother.

"You see what your protégé is worth," he said, "for all you did him a good turn. But it's queer. I dare say they've some good evidence. But I didn't think the villains would soar to a job of this sort. A bit of poaching, and some ugly work if the keepers came along, is quite in their way. But this is different altogether. It is a surprise."

The police were sure of their ground, and they brought to light a body of testimony to show that both prisoners were loitering in the Manor park, and in the footpath that led to the tennis ground, late the previous evening. And two servants deposed to seeing Black Sam in forbidden precincts—close to the house. He had, indeed, terrified them. But the jewels were not found. The miserable hovel on the hillside had been searched in vain.

Nan and Captain Fairlie exchanged a glance that on one side was a question, and on the other an appeal. Each knew it to be so.

"What had you to do there?" Nan's steadfast eyes asked. "Trust me a little longer," said the Captain's. And Nan was silent, and her faith stood the test. However things might look, she knew at length that this man had her supreme confidence, and more—her love. Oh, why had she yielded to her mother's urging?

But Mr. Stanton, whose consternation at hearing of the robbery was great, became an amateur detective, as Mrs. Covington suggested, and following her cue also with respect to Captain Fairlie, he unearthed the highly suspicious circumstance of the visit paid by Fairlie to Pewsy's cottage.

He demanded an explanation in the presence of the Squire, who was more indignant, and uneasy, and perplexed than he cared even to confess to Cecil.

"Will you deny that you paid money to this scamp?"

"Certainly I shall not deny it."

The tones were haughty and stern.

"Money to a notorious law-breaker! To leave the country, perhaps? Will you kindly account for such strange conduct at such a peculiar time?"

Captain Fairlie had a telegram in his hand; it had just been delivered. He

carelessly referred to it. It had been delayed.

"In about half an hour, I should think, it will be possible to oblige you," he said. There was a ring at the bell. He walked to the window and his manner changed.

"The farce will probably change to a serious drama here and now," he said.

"Colonel Covington," was announced. The name was like a thunderbolt to the man who had supposed himself safe when the ground was mined beneath him. He rose but could not stand. He sank back into his chair and waited for the stroke of doom. His heavy features grew ashen; his teeth began to chatter. He was a trickster of many subterfuges, and a craven at heart.

Nan's uncle was a soldier with a presence. His sixty years sat lightly upon him. He had had desperate work committed to his hands, and had never flinched. To crush a traitor was a bagatelle.

He nodded to Captain Fairlie. Another Jim Fairlie—this one's father—and he had gone through the Mutiny together; and he knew the son. He shook hands warmly with Squire Milne and Cecil. It was not his first visit to Terrick Manor. Then he faced round on another old acquaintance.

"I have come post haste from Dublin through your leafy lanes, Milne, to strip a very shady bird of borrowed plumage," he said. "This man, who, I hear, calls himself Mr. Stanton, is well known to me. He was cashiered from my own regiment eight years ago. His name is Willis Dorrell. I have not heard anything good of him since the colours and he parted. It is not my province to interfere with any guest of yours, Milne, but I don't want you to be deceived."

Dorrell stumbled to his feet with a curse.

"It was your doing that I was sent adrift," he hissed.

"It was justice, sir, and you know it."

"You were hard—hard; and if it hadn't been for Fairlie yonder I'd have had my revenge. I'd have married your niece. May I say good-bye to Nan?"

It was a last flash of bravado. Now the crash had come, the miscreant's spirits revived. But he walked to the door as he spoke. There was mischief in the set of Jim Fairlie's mouth, and he saw it.

"And now, Squire, you shall have my story—the story which that impostor has wisely thought it unnecessary to wait for, though he is pretty frequently involved,"

said Captain Fairlie, a little later, addressing his host and his host's son. "It will mean, at all events, a partial revision of your judgement in the case of the Pews. Black Sam had no more to do with the disappearance of Mrs. Covington's brilliants than—I had"—there was a proud upward twist in the voice—"but he had a considerable share in the counterplot by which Dorrell has been worsted, and by which I hope and believe Mrs. Covington will have her treasures restored."

"You don't say so!" cried the Squire. "Was Stanton in that affair too?"

"No, he was not. But he was harassed by a racing dun as unscrupulous as himself. This is what occurred. On the day of the robbery I had been to Ivinghoe to see the quaint village on the hill which may have given its title to Scott's 'Ivanhoe.' It is well worth a trip. Well, at Cheddington I was waiting for an Aylesbury train. I sat down in a corner, sheltered from the rain that was beginning, to scribble a letter. Voices reached me. They were on the other side of a wooden partition with an open window in it. Nan's name was mentioned—I mean Miss Covington."

"Yes," said Cecil Milne unnecessarily; and he smiled furtively.

"I pricked up my ears. One speaker was putting pressure on the other to get money. He threatened him with exposure. The other slowly gave way. He was going to marry Miss Covington—it would be soon, he said—then the money should be paid. He could do little at the moment, but he was anxious that Colonel Covington should not cross his path, and had a fear that the Colonel was at Terrick Manor. He persuaded the other to come and investigate for him, and the task was undertaken. Where Dorrell went I do not know. They were to meet at an inn late that night. I saw them on the platform, and yesterday Dorrell knew me again. I came to Terrick almost as soon as the spy, and as I might want witnesses, I tipped the younger Pews to spy on Fenning—that was his name. Incidentally I mentioned the name of Dorrell in Black Sam's hearing. He understood that Miss Covington was concerned, and he was grateful to Miss Covington. And Black Sam is an ex-soldier. I had found that out before, for it was not our first talk. He gave me a startling clue. He was in the ranks of the very regiment

from which Dorrell was disgraced for malversation and fraud. On that I wired Colonel Covington perhaps half-a-dozen times. And meanwhile the burglary was committed. Fenning was the burglar. Young Pewsy watched him at the window, but did not then know anything about the jewels. When Mrs. Covington's loss was discovered I took steps to have Fenning traced at once. He has been taken by this time, I hope. But the main thing in my view was to thwart Dorrell. Colonel Covington took that in hand."

It was a tremendous humiliation for the domineering woman, who, wedded absolutely to her own selection of a suitor for Nan, had nearly succeeded in giving her daughter to an adventurer. But Mrs. Covington's cup was not all bitter. Captain Fairlie's promptness restored to her the treasures which she had bemoaned. The man she had wantonly insulted scarcely knew whether audacity or adroitness was most marked when she thanked him with great geniality, and said:

"They will be Nan's one day, Captain Fairlie, so she ought to thank you, too."

And Nan did, in a formal pretty fashion all her own, then. The gaiety in her manner was chastened. A touch of melancholy was about her. Later—a month later, and in town—she thanked him in a fashion of his choosing.

"You might have spoilt my plans if you had spoken of what you saw amongst the Bucks bracken that day," he said. "Was it that you trusted me against all appearances?"

"Yes."

It was a very shy yet happy whisper.

"Behind such confidence there is sometimes love," he dared to go on. "Was it so, Nan?"

There was no answer. The silence seemed full of meaning.

"Perhaps I ought not to ask you that. I will put it otherwise, if you will let me. Will you be my wife, Nan?"

The small head drooped. She was in his arms, and there was no need of the rich, faint, "Yes, Jim." He was victor.

PAMELA AND PRUE.

CHAPTER I.

"REALLY, Miss Jardine, you ain't got any kind of tact with the poor child. He's as good as gold when Pamela is by. But you've no notion of managin' him, and

you're that inconsiderate of his little ways that—— John Jeremiah!"

The shrill Yankee voice was raised into a scream of dismay and anger to reach the other end of the long dining-room of the "Hôtel de Bretagne," in which the speaker stood scolding her governess.

"John Jeremiah, git off that table this instant, I say! You've eaten enough fruit already to be ill for a week, and you so bad yesterday with all those sweets. Get down, you naughty boy," and Mrs. John J. Spragge, of Chicago, made a dart down the room to the farther end of the long dining table, set for déjeuner, which was being pillaged by her son and heir, aged ten, who had taken advantage of Miss Jardine "catching it" to stuff his pockets with the fruit in the dishes.

"What is the matter, ma?" asked Pamela, entering with languid grace.

She spoke with a decided Yankee drawl, but she might have been Diana herself, as she appeared in the days when the earth was young to the eyes of men.

"I guess he has been up to some mischief," she went on calmly. "What's he been up to now, ma?"

Her mother looked at her with mingled respect and half-reproachful admiration.

"The poor child only wanted some plums, and—— You just go right away and see that he's all right," turning sharply to Miss Jardine; "and I do think you might try and manage him a little better."

"Nonsense, ma," said Miss Pamela Spragge calmly; "he's the tiresomest little imp I've ever seen, and it's about time he was made to mind somebody. He wants to be cuffed now and then, and I wonder Miss Jardine don't do it when your back is turned. I would—if I didn't like to do it before your face."

Mrs. J. J. Spragge's face was a study as she stood struggling between anger at the very thought of the hapless governess perpetrating such an enormity, and the half-admiring, half-awed obedience she yielded in all matters to her calm-willed beautiful daughter, who had ruled her ever since she could walk.

She was further vaguely discomfited by a soft laugh from the governess in question, as if the idea of cuffing the sacred person of John Jeremiah had awakened intense amusement, rather than humble horror, in her mind.

"I'm just sure I don't know what I keep you for, Miss Jardine," she said; "you ain't no manner of use to me, as I

see, and I'm sure that dear John Jeremiah hasn't learned——"

"Ma, don't talk so loudly, and there's Lord Acres outside," interposed the calm and beautiful Pamela, turning in the direction of the doorway, on the threshold of which at that moment appeared a slight, trim-looking young man, of rather effeminate appearance. "There he is," all in the same tone, as if this exhibition of loud vulgarity and petty insolence on her mother's part before her fastidious patrician lover in no way disconcerted her. "Cyril!" as he seemed to hesitate for a second on the threshold, with something blank on his face, which she took for shocked disapproval, "come in. It is about time you made the acquaintance of my mother, I think," with a slight laugh. It was difficult to say in what it lay, but as she spoke there was something in her tone or manner which gave her a little touch of quiet pride, and added inestimably to her charm and grace. The heiress of the self-made millionaire was lost in the dignity of the woman and daughter who was neither ashamed for herself nor for her parents, though her lover could trace his noble ancestry back to the Conquest.

Perhaps he felt it, and it reassured him, for he came forward more quickly and took the outstretched hand of his future mother-in-law, whose ruffled feelings subsided under this new excitement.

This was the first time she had seen her daughter's affianced husband. They had become engaged a week ago at an English country house where Pamela and he were staying.

Pamela had come over to her mother at Dinan two days after the engagement, and Lord Acres was to join them a day or two later. He had arrived a day earlier than he was expected, and Pamela, coming down into the hall of the hotel a few moments before, just when the storm in the dining-room was at its height, had found him there. She had only time to shake hands and then had gone to the rescue of her mother, and had caught John Jeremiah in his flight.

Miss Jardine had of course heard of the engagement. Mrs. J. J. Spragge had been far too proud and elated over it to keep it to herself; every one in the hotel had heard that "my daughter" was betrothed to an English nobleman.

Miss Jardine was apparently very weary of the subject, for she turned aside, with the faintest suspicion of disdain on her

still pale face, as Lord Acres was introduced to Mrs. J. J. Spragge, and moved towards the door.

Pamela stopped her.

"I want to introduce Lord Acres to you, Miss Jardine," she said; "I guess you two will like each other; she's real nice," with a bright laugh turning to her lover, "and—well," in the same light tone to Miss Jardine, but with something tender, like the passing of an angel's wing, shadowing her eyes, "he is rather nice, too."

Miss Jardine and Lord Acres bowed to each other, Miss Jardine's grey eyes resting quietly for a second on the sunburned face of the young man, who turned back, the instant he had acknowledged the introduction, to Mrs. J. J. Spragge, while Miss Jardine, with a smile at Pamela, left the room.

"Whatever possessed you to introduce those two like that, Pamela?" asked her mother, disturbed and vexed, as later on she talked over her future son-in-law with her daughter.

"He didn't like it, I think. He thought likely enough that you were mocking him; they are so easily ruffled up, men are. I saw him bite his lip under that dandy little moustache of his, and the back of his neck went quite red under the sun-brown. Besides, Pamela, she is only your brother's——"

"She is much better born than we are, ma," said the beautiful Pamela carelessly. "Her people were once his equals, only they got poor and emigrated; and Cyril isn't that sort. He thinks a lot of himself, but isn't mean like that! I shouldn't have taken him if he were."

"Well, I don't like that Prue Jardine myself, and what all the men seem to see in her I can't make out. She hasn't a quarter your beauty——"

"But a man would go on caring for her long after he had tired of me," said Pamela languidly. "A man who had once loved her would love her to the end."

"Nonsense, Pam," said her mother, in her indignation dropping into the old familiar appellation of the days before they had risen into fashionable society.

"I guess it isn't nonsense, ma," said Pamela, walking to the window and looking across the great Place upon which the "Hôtel de Bretagne" faced.

The sunshine of a perfect autumn afternoon flooded it, and through the golden light stirred the pulses of human life.

There a squad of soldiers marching at ease back to barracks, their roving eyes glancing roguishly at the girls as they tripped across the square with their white "bonnets" and big market baskets on their arms. There a group of little brown-faced French children in their blouses, with their close-cropped heads; pretty English girls; tourists gazing about them with their Baedeker, passing and repassing; a smiling, busy, chattering human crowd, with its setting of quaint, old-world houses.

And as Pamela gazed out upon it, her unimaginative mind was kindled by the strange new fire that had given life to her heart and soul, and she thought that though men came and went, and laughed and loved and died, that love, like the sunshine, lived on always, kindling into golden light the lives of those passing to and fro in the old Place to-day, as it had done those of that day of long ago when French and English had met and fought together in the quaint old town.

CHAPTER II.

"It is enough to make a man mad to see it! How can you put up with it—Miss Jardine?"

There was a faint hesitation before the name, as if some other name had nearly slipped out. Lord Acres and Prue Jardine were walking side by side on the old walls under the shadow of the trees.

Prue walked on with a faintly set look in her face. This interview would have to take place some time or another, and it was best to have it over. The strain of avoiding it was too great. She braced herself up now to face it, as she would have faced the surgeon's knife.

The last time Cyril Grant, as he was called then, and she had talked alone together, had been under the starlight among the red woods at the back of a Californian store. Then he had told her how he, who had lived for the last year under her father's roof, sharing their toils, their anxieties, and the pleasures that had come even into their hard-pressed lives, had that day heard that he had come into an English earldom. The news had been so unexpected that he had, before it came, made up his mind to settle down for good in that part of the world. But all the vague, sweet understanding which had sprung up between them had suddenly ended that night under the starlight, when he told her of the change that had come into his life.

At the break of the next day he had gone away, and from that day to this they had neither seen nor heard anything of each other. That parting took place three years ago.

Some months after Acres' departure, Prue's father had died. Prue, left quite alone in the world, had taken the post of governess to the son of the millionaire, and had lived with them ever since—why or how, few people could understand. It passed the comprehension of Acres. He remembered her as a starry-eyed, high-spirited, laughing girl, and her submission to her present conditions of life was inexplicable.

"How you can put up with the tempers and cranks of that old——" Then he suddenly remembered that the old woman in question was to be his mother-in-law.

Prue, knowing perfectly what he had been on the point of saying, and understanding far better than even Pamela did how his fastidious refinement, natural and inherited, must be jarred upon by his future relation's vulgarity and ostentation, went on quietly:

"I do not mind it. I stay because of Pamela. She is as sweet-hearted as she is lovely."

"Yes," he said, his eyes still dark with the perplexity of finding her here. "I say," he said, with a sudden laugh, "do you ever remember the old days and want to 'go a-visitin' back to Grigsby's station'? I do sometimes. By George! How queer and odd it all seemed!" with another laugh, which had a note of bitterness in it. "It was quite a time before I got used to having my boots cleaned for me, and when I see the girls riding in the Park or taking the fences across country, I remember how you and I used to ride through the red woods, and how sweetly the pines used to smell. And do you remember the azalea bush just at the back of the store, and the sleighing in winter, and——"

He stopped short, drawing himself up stiffly and biting his lips under his fair moustache.

"Yes; I remember it all," she said steadily.

The short autumn afternoon was closing in; the golden lights had faded, and white, fairy-like mists were beginning to rise from the gardens that had once been deep moats, and crept like pale ghosts of those old dead days about the trees and bushes, as if they had stolen back to look once more on the grim and frowning walls

which had once shut in the quaint, beautiful town; but which to-day were so covered by creepers and ivy, so garlanded with flowers, so picturesquely broken by the houses that had been built into their frowning grey strength, that a writer who loved it has said that Dinan was like a young girl trying on a suit of old armour over her ball-dress.

Prue stopped as she spoke and looked about her.

There was not a soul in sight for the moment. There was no sound save the distant voices of some children in the dusky valley below, and the stir of the wind as it rustled the yellowing leaves of the trees overhead and sent them drifting earthwards.

"How chilly it is growing!" she said, with a little shiver. "It is time I took John Jeremiah in. He has a bad cold already."

But John Jeremiah's cold did not rouse any interest or anxiety in the heart of Acres. He stood, pulling restlessly at the leaves of one of the shrubs that fringed the old fosse, looking down into her pale face with contracted brows, and as he looked the spell of her presence fell on him again, and he forgot everything except that she was to him the sweetest woman his heart had ever known. He had striven hard to forget her; but as Pamela had said, she was one of those women whom no man, having loved, could ever forget. Though the old bright prettiness had faded, the grey, black-fringed eyes were the same, and if the lips had paled a little, the sweet loveableness was still there, and their gravity suddenly stirred him as even their mocking, mischievous laughter had never done.

"Prue," he said sharply, "why did you never answer my letter? Ah, heavens! How I waited, day after day, month after month! And—I had been such a fool. I had actually dared to hope when I left America that I might win you for my wife. But I think you might have sent me a line, just one line to say you were sorry. It would not have made it any easier to bear, perhaps, but it would have been a little less rough on me. And I loved you so!" under his breath.

"What letter, Cyril?" She did not know that she was using the old familiar name. "I never had any letter," going on in a still, dull tone, as she suddenly knew perfectly well what had been. "I thought you had gone away and forgotten, that was all."

There was a dead pause. Only the wind rustled a little louder and more fretfully in the trees overhead, and one of the yellowing leaves fluttered down on to Prue's shoulder.

"You never got my letter asking you to be my wife? And it did not come back, so I thought you had received it. And then I met John Grey in London one day, and he told me you were engaged to that Hill fellow, whom I always used to hate."

"I never had a letter, and it was all a——"

"Lie! Curse him! Grey had sworn to be even with me, because of that row we had about the tenderfoot he was swindling. Prue! Prue! Oh! And I still love you, Prue!" as he read something in her face that made it as pale as the ghostly mists stealing about them. "And you did care for me after all, my darling!"

Her hands went out to his, then fell to her side as she remembered.

"Pamela!" she cried. "Oh, how could we forget Pamela?"

CHAPTER III.

"An' so I didn't jump out on them an' frighten them. I thought most likely she'd feel mad. An' she did cry so. An' she told him to go right away, an' she hoped you and he would be very happy. An' I was glad when they'd finished, for I was gettin' the cramp scrunched up there, an' wanted to sneeze. An' I guess, way they talked, they thought a mighty lot of you, an' his voice was drefful sad, an' I guess they felt sick enough, so I let them go away without knowin' I was there." John Jeremiah the same evening was telling Pamela what he had overheard that afternoon on the boulevards, where he had hidden among the shrubs, intending to pounce out upon Prue and frighten her.

"I guess she felt real sick," went on John Jeremiah again, while Pamela, leaning in her usual indolent pose against the window, gazed out on to the Place below. There was no golden light now. It was dark with the early autumn night, through which gleamed, here and there, the scattered lights of houses and streets. But people were still passing to and fro, and the sound of voices came up from the verandah below. A girl's laugh rang out suddenly, and Pamela wondered if she had a lover.

"An' Miss Jardine's going away to-morrow. She said she should. She's going to tell ma she is obliged to go back to England. I guess I'd like to tell her that that's a big cram."

"No, you won't," said his sister, turning slowly round to face him. "If you promise not to say a word to a soul about what you heard this afternoon, and never say a word, whatever happens, I'll give you the biggest toy ship that was ever made. I'll get it built for you by a real shipbuilder on the Clyde when we get round there."

John Jeremiah's eyes kindled. The one region where he might be said to approach that state of virtue in which good little boys ought to live, and which, therefore, was wide enough to contain his restless, ambitious soul, was an ocean. He was bent on becoming a sailor.

Then the eager light faded.

"I guess I'll want to talk about it to some one," he said, in a depressed tone. "I'll be lettin' it out; because there are a lot of things I should want to know: Why she cried so, and why the letter he mailed never went, an' who John Grey was, an' why they both seemed so sorry for you; as if he couldn't love you both——"

"I'll tell you what it is, John Jeremiah," she interrupted him suddenly, "you can just come and talk to me about it, and we'll try and invent answers ourselves to the questions you ask; only you mustn't ask me too many, nor want to talk too much about it all," with a queer little smile that was rather a quiver of the lips than a laugh. The bargain was made, and John Jeremiah gave his promise. He had a way of keeping a promise when, by dint of coaxing or bribing, he was persuaded to make one.

Early next morning, much to Mrs. J. J. Spragge's indignation, Prue left Dinan, urgent necessity recalling her to England, she said. It was Pamela who, in her calm way, smoothed down her mother's ruffled feelings and nipped in the bud an inclination of that good lady to refuse to let her go, so astonished she was at her inconsiderate conduct towards the "poor darling John Jeremiah."

That young man, before whom his mother discussed most of the affairs of their daily life, sat listening with tightly shut mouth and eyes bright with such a keen desire to relieve himself of the secret weighing on him, that Pamela took him out of the room to save him from the strain.

"I say, Pam," he said, when out of hearing, "what makes you want her to go so?—an' I didn't say a word, though I wanted to badly. Do you want her to go away so that Cyril shan't have you both to love? You're real greedy. I don't mind you loving him as well as me."

"You silly little goose!" exclaimed his sister rather sharply. But she put her arm round his shoulders as if her heart felt suddenly a comfort in the undivided affection of even this reprobate young brother of hers. "Don't talk about things you don't understand. When you grow up I guess you'll find your life only big enough to hold one girl. They take an awful lot of room—they don't like to be cramped; it is like living in a house with some of the rooms shut up and locked; they always want to go into those, you see."

"Girls are mighty curious," said John Jeremiah, "always wantin' to know things, and poke into every place, and always askin' questions. Say, Pam, do you think Cyril will be sorry Prue Jardine is going?"

"Don't worry so, John Jeremiah," with an unusual energy and anger in her languid tones, and she put him out of her room.

She saw Prue before she went. She read something in Prue's eyes as she said good-bye, John Jeremiah having given her the clue. And the grey pitying eyes, dark with the pathos of the two girls' lives, made the breath catch in her own throat. Then she bent forward and kissed her.

"It's a pity you've got to go," she said in her matter-of-fact tones; "and I expect once you get away from John Jeremiah you won't feel called upon to come back to us."

About half an hour before déjeuner Acres was strolling up the Rue du Jersual, that wonderful old French street, with its picturesque houses, a street which stands out like some painted page from the book of the past, with all its anomaly of modern noises and dirt and evil smells. Acres glanced listlessly about him as he climbed its steepness. But he stood looking at a slender and stately figure which had just turned into the street a little way above him, and was now moving down towards him with graceful, leisurely steps, daintily gloved and shod, with the prettiest and most becoming of Paris hats, and betraying at every point of her perfect morning toilette the "smart" and

fashionable millionaire's daughter. It was Pamela. For one second he hesitated, a stifled exclamation, like a faint groan, on his lips. Then he recovered himself and went forward to meet her, with the simple chivalry of his own heart to guide him, and the memory of the tearful pleading in Prue's eyes, as she begged him not to forget Pamela, to strengthen him.

She smiled as he approached her. He could not smile in response, but he greeted her with a gentle tenderness that made her look away for a second.

"I'm glad I met you," she said as they walked on together; "I have something to say to you, and as it has to be said, I think the sooner it is done the better. I hope you won't think I am behaving badly to you, but—I don't feel somehow as if I could carry this engagement of ours through. Perhaps I was ambitious. You know," she laughed, but if the sound was a little bitter, he was too overwhelmed to hear it, "they say we Americans always want titles to wear—perhaps—anyway, if you don't mind, I would rather——" She glanced up at him calm and smiling. "Well, I guess I'd rather marry some one else than you—if you don't mind."

"And you will not be 'my lady' after all!" exclaimed her mother in bitter disappointment, when a few hours later she heard that the engagement between her daughter and Lord Acres was broken off.

"No, ma; I think I would rather be 'your serene highness.' I shall marry a prince."

And only John Jeremiah noticed that her eyelids were a little red when she came downstairs next morning; and as his shrewd little precocious brain put various odds and ends of facts together, he thought, as he offered her, in an attack of mute sympathy, a warm squashed peach which he had been carrying about in his trousers pocket since daybreak, that girls were the queerest things in the world.

Three months later Mrs. J. J. Spragge saw in an English paper the announcement of the marriage of Prue to Lord Acres.

"I wouldn't have married him if he would have made me a queen!" said Pamela, with a sudden strange passion.

A MAID OF THE PEAK.

ON a mountain road in the Peak District that leads from a secluded valley among the hills to a neighbouring dale, stands,

plain and stern, close to the road but backed by a grove of wispy-looking fir-trees, an old stone house known as Garforth Fold. It is not much superior to an ordinary farmhouse, but it has certain features of distinction—in a porch of some architectural pretension, and a date and heraldic device in stone over the doorway. But whatever claims the Garforths might have had to consider themselves as country gentry, they had been content for several generations to abandon the position. They had loved drinking, gambling, horse-racing more than any social distinction; but instead of ruining themselves by dissipation, the Garforths had rather thriven upon it. One of them had actually won money on the turf, and had built a cotton mill with his winnings. The last Squire Garforth had been a patron of pugilists, had even fought himself and vanquished a professional champion, had owned race-horses and trained them, and if other people lost money over them, he generally managed to be on the right side. And he had captured and married a pretty little delicate woman, and had brought her to his den among the hills, and there she had pined away and died, leaving a son, Reuben, and a daughter, Constance, both of whom inherited rather her sensitive, delicate nature than the rough, granitic character of their father.

With such surroundings, Reuben had been led into evil courses from his youth up. He had many amiable qualities, which only made him the easier prey of the unscrupulous people about him. His father's death had left him in command of a considerable sum of money, as well as the possessor of a small landed estate, and he had quickly squandered the former and deeply encumbered the latter parts of his heritage. Constance had only inherited a thousand pounds. But Reuben, as long as his money lasted, had shown himself a generous and affectionate brother. He had provided for all the expenses of her education, and the presents he had made her in clothing and jewellery were numerous and valuable. Yet he left her to herself week after week and month after month, while he went from one race-meeting to another, or passed the time with bachelor friends, among whom baccarat was the favourite diversion, and who spent their time in little else than giving or taking odds, not only on race-horses, but on the most trivial occurrences of everyday life. Left to herself, with only old Judith, the

sometime nurse, to look after her, Constance might from sheer ennui have been driven into unfitting companionship; but she had a happy disposition, which did not require any exciting nourishment. She loved flowers, music, and birds, and then she had as neighbours two nice friendly old maids, very bright and cheerful in disposition, although growing old; and at the pretty cottage of the Misses Jackson Constance was always a welcome guest. And there was a pleasant excitement in these visits, for the old ladies had a plentiful supply of nephews, bright, handsome youths, generally on some scheme of pleasure bent, and eager to have Constance as a companion. And there was an elder nephew, Arthur Jackson, strong, good-looking, and amiable, between whom and Constance there was a strong mutual tenderness.

The Jacksons had been for several generations proprietors of a huge cotton mill which occupied a pleasant valley some miles distant. It had produced a good deal of wealth in its time. Little colonies of Jacksons, pleasantly settled here and there in wealth and comfort, might have looked back to the old mill as their alma mater. But now, like some tired old horse, it seemed as if it were no longer equal to the burden it had to bear. The spindles no longer spun gold, and silks, and jewels; it was enough if they furnished household loaves and dairy butter. The young people, gay and careless, felt none of the strain of altered times; but the father was a grave and careworn man, and a shadow of care and responsibility had fallen upon the bright, handsome face of the eldest son, Arthur.

Time had mellowed the old mill, which had even an impressive appearance seen from one end of the lake or big reservoir, the latter well covered with lilies and water-plants, and swarming with pretty goldfish. And ivy and creepers had grown over the old mill, and trees had sprung up around it, and without any definite boundary there stretched beyond the pleasant but roughly kept grounds of Colworth Hall, where the Jacksons lived.

"The girl is all very well herself," said the elder Jackson one day, in a conference with his son Arthur; "but there is the brother."

"Well, it isn't Reuben I want to marry," said Arthur lightly. "Poor Reuben, he is not a bad fellow after all."

"Well, he's a very undesirable con-

nexion, anyhow," said Mr. Jackson judicially; "a connexion that might undermine the credit of a stronger firm than ours."

There was some force in this consideration, Arthur was compelled to acknowledge; so much, indeed, that the young man prudently resolved to go no more the way towards his aunt's, at Topping Edge. And he kept this resolution very firmly for some time, listening with eager ears, however, to accounts of his brothers' expeditions here and there, and how Connie did this and the other, and not angry, indeed, when a battle royal occurred between two of the younger ones, aged ten and twelve, as to which was to marry Connie in future years. But it was quite otherwise when one day the lads came down from the Edge with an account of a dull day among the hills, Connie being absent, having sent a message that she was not well enough to join the party; and at this Arthur was struck with something like remorse. Had he behaved heartlessly in staying away without a word of explanation, and was poor Connie suffering, as he was, from an aching heart? Well, he would see her once more, anyhow, and so took horse and rode away up to the hills.

"Eh, but you're a stranger quite, Master Arthur," said old Judith, as she opened the door, "and Miss Connie has been but poorly; but she'll be right glad to see you, sir."

Pale and interesting was Constance, with a gray shawl wrapped about her shoulders, and shivering a little, partly from chilliness, but more from the glad excitement of the visit. There was no mistaking the light that shone from Connie's eyes as she put her hand half timidly into Arthur's.

"I have been so uneasy about you," said the latter, a little troubled too. "I could not help riding over to see you."

"How kind of you!" murmured Connie gratefully.

"Oh, Connie," broke forth Arthur, still retaining the hand she had given him, "I have been trying to live without seeing you, but I found it impossible."

"Really and truly?" asked Connie with shining eyes.

"But it was father's fault," said Arthur awkwardly, and Connie's face clouded over, and she tried to withdraw her hand.

"Oh, darling," cried Arthur, "he does like you, and would welcome you as a daughter; but you know we are business people, and—well, you know, Connie, when

we are married it won't do for us to be much mixed up with Reuben."

This time there was no mistaking the determination with which Constance snatched her hand from Arthur's.

"You ask me to give up my brother, who has been so good to me—you, Arthur, who pretend to be fond of me, and come to see me in Reuben's house! Oh, I did not think you could be so cruel!"

Constance burst into tears, utterly discomfiting Arthur, who was prepared to argue the point, and even to make concessions. But Constance would not listen to him. In her way she was, perhaps, even more proud and obstinate than Arthur, and all his attempts to accommodate matters only ended in further estrangement.

So Arthur rode down the hills again, angry and dissatisfied, and as he passed the station on the way home he saw that the train from London had just called there and left behind it a little knot of passengers. There was a dog-cart waiting for the new arrivals, and a cart for luggage. And Reuben Garforth had just arrived with two or three friends, among whom was a lady of very striking appearance, with everything about her of the newest fashion, to whom Reuben was most devotedly attentive. As for the men, they were rather loud and "horsey" in manner, Arthur thought, and on decidedly good terms with the lady, whom one called "Loo" and the other "Sis." They were not the people he should choose to associate with his Constance; but, there, he had now no right to interfere. Evidently these people had come down for the "twelfth," now close at hand. For whatever Reuben's embarrassments might be, which were pretty well known by his neighbours, he still had his grouse moors, which were of considerable extent, and fairly stocked.

Reuben caught sight of Arthur, stopped him by a gesture, and came forward with a friendly greeting.

"Seen Constance lately?" he asked lightly, yet with meaning.

"I have just come from the Fold," replied Arthur. "She did not say she expected you."

"Nor does she," replied Reuben. "These are my friends, not hers," with an expressive shrug. "We are going to the old shooting house to rough it. Mrs. Seltzer keeps house for us; we have got a capital old cook, and I dare say we shall be very jolly."

"I dare say you will," said Arthur drily, as he rode off.

Poor Reuben! he had still some tender feeling for his sister, but how reckless and inconsistent was his conduct!

As soon as Reuben had packed off his friends, with gun-cases, and baggage, and all belongings, he started himself to walk to the Fold. It was only a three miles' walk, but every step of it was uphill; and Reuben, who in former days would have thought nothing of it, now felt almost exhausted as he reached the top of the hill. The sun had set, and the moon, full-orbed, rose in yellow splendour over the mountain brow, and gleamed upon the old home that by this uncertain light was softened into an object of tender picturesqueness. Dogs barked as he approached the door of his home, but their barking was changed to a joyous whining as he turned the handle and walked in. The whole house was silent and unlighted, and passing through the hall into the old oak parlour the moon shone through the diamond-paned window upon the golden locks of poor Constance, as she sat by the window, her head pillowed on her arms, in an attitude of deep dejection. But she sprang to her feet with a cry of joy as she heard her brother's voice.

"Why, what is the matter, pet?" said Reuben, fondling his sister's tresses as they lay scattered over his shoulder. "Who has been making you cry, dear? I say," he went on fiercely, "is it Arthur? He said he had just seen you. Has he said anything to hurt you?"

"As if I cared!" said Connie, drawing herself up proudly.

Reuben drew from her by degrees the facts of the case—how Arthur wanted to marry her, but the intolerable condition that he proposed.

"They are grandly right, those Jacksons," said Reuben. "I am not a desirable connexion. You should make it up with Arthur without thinking about me, for I am going to perdition as fast as I can."

"Then we will go to perdition together," said Constance, clinging to his arm.

"No, no," replied Reuben, "that is a journey one must take alone. And, Connie, I have been a greater rogue and scoundrel than my worst enemy would believe."

Reuben went on to say how he had had a terribly bad week at Goodwood, losing five hundred pounds in one way or another, and, afraid to face the disgrace of being a defaulter, he had gone to a money-lender

of his acquaintance, who undertook to advance sufficient to save Reuben's reputation on his getting a substantial friend to join with him in a bill. Substantial friends who are ready to join in bills for another's benefit are rare, and as the world grows older tend to become rarer than ever. In the emergency Reuben wrote the name of Arthur Jackson without any authority for doing so. In other words, he forged his friend's name.

The truth was worse than anything Constance had imagined. Ruin in its ordinary forms was nothing to such deep disgrace as this, and accompanied by such humiliation. The disgrace must be averted at all hazards.

"Reuben," said Constance, "I have a thousand pounds. You must take that and get back that terrible paper. Then we will sell all we have and emigrate to some country where we can earn an honest living together."

"You are a dear, good girl to think of such a sacrifice," said Reuben. "But luckily it is out of your power. Your money is in the hands of Crook, the banker, as trustee, and no one can touch it, not even you yourself, till you are of age."

"But if I went to Mr. Crook and begged and implored him?"

Reuben smiled.

"You would melt a heart of stone, no doubt, but you would not melt a guinea out of Mr. Crook. Leave me to my fate, dear; it won't be as bad as you think. Anyhow, I shall have a good fortnight's shooting before black night comes on."

And then he kissed her, said good-bye, and loosed his dogs, whistling them after him as he strode over the moor towards the old shooting house.

But Constance was resolved that her brother should not perish. Next morning she rode over to the town and saw her trustee, Mr. Crook, who kindly but decidedly refused to anticipate the payment of her father's legacy. He showed her a copy of her father's will, by which the sum of a thousand pounds was bequeathed to her, payable to her on the day she attained the age of twenty-one years, or on the day of her marriage, whichever should first occur.

"Then if I were married you would have to pay me, Mr. Crook?" said Constance.

"And with great pleasure," replied Mr. Crook. "That is, if the gentleman were worthy of my old friend's daughter."

Reuben had fully determined that his friends at the shooting house should not make his sister's acquaintance. But they knew that he had a place in the neighbourhood, and had their own reasons for being a little curious as to his belongings. And at the end of the first day's shooting Captain Gage complained of a sprained ankle, and left it to Major Soane to accompany his host on the following day. But the Captain found that a little exercise would be of benefit for his sprain, and in the course of the day he found his way to Garforth Fold.

Constance received him gladly. He had brought some trifling message, invented at the moment, from her brother; and he spoke in such a pleasant, sympathetic way that he won the girl's confidence at once.

To hear the Captain's lamb-like utterances you would have thought him one of Reuben's soberest friends and best advisers. He lamented his devotion to racing and gambling; and he feared that poor Reuben had got into serious trouble. Would that he could help him. But what could a poor devil of a Captain on half-pay do for a friend, with an income that just paid his club subscription, his garret in Jermyn Street, and his railway fares to friends' houses? As for tips to servants, he had to borrow the money from his hosts.

The Captain's jolly laugh and frank manners quite won upon poor Constance. Here was a man, surely, whom she could trust, and one who loved her brother, and would do anything to serve him. And she opened her heart to him.

Reuben, she said, was in bitter need of a thousand pounds, which must be raised by a certain day. Could Captain Gage suggest any means by which the money could be raised?

The Captain shook his head hopelessly.

"Then listen to my plan," said Constance. She told the Captain of the thousand pounds in the bank, which could only be released on her coming of age or on her wedding day. "Now, we must devise a plan," said Constance, fearless in her ignorance and innocence, "of a merely colourable marriage. I have read of such things," continued Constance. "Some old pensioner who, for a handsome present, would go before the registrar. Oh, there would be no religious ceremony, and so nothing really wicked."

"I'm afraid the old pensioner would

prove very troublesome," said Captain Gage, shaking his head wisely.

No, the plan was a good one, but it would be better for all parties that it should be carried out among friends, and in a confidential way. Now, if he might with all humility, he would suggest himself as the right kind of dummy to occupy the position of Miss Garforth's ostensible partner.

Constance was a little frightened now, but she remembered what was at stake, and took courage.

"It is very kind of you to make the offer," she said, "but would it be right in me to accept it? I don't know the law, but I am afraid it would prevent your really marrying anybody else."

"The same consideration applies to you," said the Captain gravely.

"Yes, but I shall never want to marry—now," said Constance with a sigh.

"I am in precisely the same position. My heart is widowed," said the Captain solemnly.

But he did not insist further in the matter. Probably when Miss Garforth had thought the thing over some better way might occur to her; but if she wanted his help, she had only to send him a message, and he would arrange everything as she wished.

Alas, no "better way" presented itself to poor Constance, and her innocent plot proceeded to its bitter end. Captain Gage was ready-witted and experienced, and all the arrangements ran without a hitch. Constance, in a plain, homespun skirt and jacket, presented herself at the registrar's office, the binding words were muttered, and the certificate of marriage obtained. The next visit was to the banker. All Constance's papers were in order; Captain Gage was in evidence; there was no reasonable ground for delaying payment. The money was handed over in a roll of notes to Constance, who joyfully clutched them, thinking of the delight of saving Reuben and preserving the family honour.

Fervent were her expressions of gratitude to Captain Gage, who, rather to her embarrassment, accompanied her on the way towards home. It was only a proper attention on his part, but she would gladly have dispensed with it. But as they approached the Fold Constance saw, standing in the road before the house, a carriage and pair with postillion, such a novel sight just then that she exclaimed: "I wonder who has come now!"

"That," said Captain Gage gravely, "is for the beginning of our honeymoon journey." Did Miss Garforth think that such charms as hers were to be resisted by mortal man? They had taken each other for better and for worse, and poor as were his own pretensions, she would find him a devoted, an adoring husband. Much more he had to say in the same strain, to which Constance listened in indignant silence. But when he went on to say that he would not allow her to squander her little fortune in trying to rescue a disgraced spendthrift from his proper doom, and that the money would give them both a gay and happy time abroad till his own remittances fell in, Constance told him in a low, cold voice that he was a scoundrel, and she had rather die than live with him.

"But you won't have the choice, my dear," said the Captain with bitter suavity. "There is no one here to help you, so jump into the carriage without making a scene or a scandal." He opened the carriage door as he seized Constance by the wrist. She screamed. The postboy looked round wonderingly, and out of the carriage stepped a tall and handsome woman, the same who at the station the other day was addressed by her companions as "Sis" or "Loo."

The effect upon Captain Gage was magical. At once, so to say, he curled up, took off his hat with a muttered apology, and made the best of his way out of sight.

"You were right, my dear," said the tall woman, taking Constance by the hand. "He is a scoundrel, although he is my husband. And he has pillaged your poor brother pretty well—that I have nothing to say to; but when it comes to ruining and plundering a sweet, innocent little girl like you it is another matter. No, I'll not come into your house. I can say what I want out here. But first take this." Mrs. Gage drew from a handsome pouch a little strip of blue paper which she handed to Constance. "I got it out of his desk last night. It's the bill your brother was so uneasy about. No, there's nothing to pay for it, dear," as Constance was about to resort to her roll of notes. "They've had enough out of him already. Keep your little fortune tight, my dear, and give me a kiss if you will; and if you ever hear of Louisa Gage, think a bit kindly of her for the good turn she has done you; and," in a whisper, "if ever that man troubles you, give him in charge to the police."

But in truth Captain Gage soon ceased

from troubling altogether, as he broke his neck soon after in a steeplechase. And in that way the awkward question of the validity of the queer marriage was never mooted. Reuben, warned by the frightful peril which his sister had run in trying to save him, and ashamed of having fallen a victim to notorious gamblers, took a new course, and began to retrieve his lost fortune as a dairy farmer on his own heavily burdened lands. As for Arthur, when he was told of poor Connie's trials by her brother, who was determined that her real motives should be known, in his love and pity he would have had her marry him at once, and thus silence all chattering tongues. But Constance would not hear of this, and it was only when Captain Gage's death was known that she consented to share Arthur's fortunes, and to become the admired centre of a lot of gallant young brothers who are ready to "knock anybody's head off" who says anything disagreeable about sister Connie.

MISTAKEN IDENTITY.

CHAPTER I. AT UFFORD'S BAY.

UFFORD'S BAY is a small but fashionable watering-place, with a fine sea-front looking out on to the broad Atlantic. The bay itself is one of great beauty, being backed by lofty hills, which shelve down gradually to the shore, and are clothed with a rich growth of woods and shrubs. The town occupies the head of a small arm of the sea, situated between Portlington Head and Hornsea Bill, and consists mainly of a long row of modern houses, broken only by an imposing structure known as the Library and Assembly Rooms, and two rather pretentious hotels. A fine shingly beach sloped down from the parade to the water's edge, and it and the waters of the bay were plentifully besprinkled with boats of all descriptions, and beyond was the broad ocean just ruffled by a soft westerly breeze. Such was the opening scene of my story.

It had been a splendid autumn day, calm, bright, and hot—almost too hot to be enjoyable; but as the day waned a little breeze had sprung up which had greatly modified the heat of the morning.

It was a glorious evening; there was music in the air, and beauty was spread as a mantle over both sea and land; the eye, the ear, and all the more artistic perceptions of the mind were gratified. The

heavens were aglow with the soft radiance of the setting sun; the dark sea was tinted with its golden rays; the low wash of the wavelets as they broke on the shore, the soft treble of children's voices as they paddled in the rising tide, and the distant notes of a piano; all blending into one harmonious whole, filled the heart of my heroine with thanksgiving, and shed a calm, contemplative charm over the beautiful scene which spread itself out before her.

Eleanor Brinkler, though not yet five-and-twenty, was a widow, and as lovely a creature as ever the eye of man rested on. How exquisitely beautiful she looked, seated on the beach with her shapely white hands clasped before her, words would fail to portray. She was plainly and simply costumed; no ornaments detracted from her pure loveliness, a fragrant bunch of roses closed the lace frill which crossed her white throat, and a knot of the same sweet-scented flowers was stuck in her waistband.

Still, beautiful as she was, there was something in her tone and attitude that spoke of listlessness or ennui, and her graceful head was bent in a desponding curve.

She was looking back into her life, which had been an eventful one. Like most of us she had had her crosses and trials. First among them was that she did not marry her first love, a very handsome young fellow, who, having neither fortune nor position, nor any likelihood of obtaining either, was rather unceremoniously rejected by her father, a sensible, but not particularly amiable man, who, being averse to long engagements, cut the Gordian knot of the romantic attachment by taking Eleanor abroad, and eventually married her to a man who was able to make her a good and ample settlement. The lover, a briefless barrister, took his rejection so to heart, that he threw up his profession and went to America, and the last she heard of him was that he had joined an exploring party, which was about to cross the Rocky Mountains.

Eleanor was one of those happy-minded creatures who have the knack of making the best of everything. Instead, therefore, after her marriage, of making herself and her home unhappy, she did just the contrary, and, like all who work honestly and earnestly, she was not without her reward.

Her second trouble was that she had no

children, and her third that—at the end of four years, during which she had learned to love him—her husband died, leaving her his blessing and all that he possessed. This was followed by the death of her father. All these trials she bore with equanimity and fortitude. At first, like all widows, she was inconsolable, and for months she never went into society. Then when she began to recover, she felt that though it had been quite proper, and very genteel and nice, to dress in crape and hide her pretty curls in one of those goffer'd abominations yeleft a widow's cap, yet this could not go on for ever. Everybody said she looked remarkably well in her weeds, which was not wonderful, seeing that a really pretty woman looks well in anything.

It is painful to have to confess that Eleanor Brinkler, good and beautiful as she was, was after all only a woman, having the same feelings and governed by the same passions as ordinary mortals.

For a whole year, twelve long months, she duly and truly cherished the memory of the late lamented Edward Augustus; but as time went on she began to fancy widowhood was, after all, a rather dull and monotonous life. It was all very well for a change, but it would not do for always. It was not possible for her to go on all her life loving an idea, a memory; she wanted something warmer and more tangible. She felt, as the dictionary phrased it, that she was a relict, and she did not want to be a relict any longer. There were plenty of good-looking fellows who were quite of the same opinion, and when she returned to society she had numerous suitors; but none of them were successful, and the world thought she was very fastidious. Yes, the London season was over and she was still a widow.

And now, here she was sitting on the beach at Uford's Bay, watching the sunset, and wondering what had become of Arthur Mingay, who she now discovered was her first and also her only love.

She sat on, in a languid sort of a doze, thinking of her lost lover. Should she ever see him again? Was he alive or dead? Had he forgotten her? All these thoughts flashed through her mind in rapid succession—it was not the first time they had done so—and then her attention was attracted by the steady dip of oars, and on looking up, she saw a gentleman in a wherry, rowing leisurely towards her. There was something in his figure that

she seemed to recognise, and when he had passed, to her surprise and astonishment, she saw that it was Arthur Mingay, her quondam lover.

"That's him, that's the great actor," whispered Mrs. Burstall, the lady who was sitting beside her.

"Who did you say?" asked Eleanor.

"Cyril Thornton, the great tragedian!"

"Is that his real name?"

"I haven't the least idea. Those theatrical gentlemen so often play under assumed names."

"Just so," replied Eleanor; "and if I am not mistaken, that gentleman's legal cognomen is not Thornton."

"Perhaps not," replied Mrs. Burstall, "but it's the name entered in the hotel books."

"Is he staying at the 'Portlington,' then?"

"Yes; you will see him, no doubt, at the table d'hôte."

She sat on thinking. She should see him again; the idea set her heart beating wildly, and the hot blood rose to her cheeks.

At this moment there was a crunching among the shingle, and Captain Burstall's voice came saying:

"I say, Maud, do you know what time it is?"

"No, dear," answered his wife; "is it late?"

"Yes, past seven!"

And the two ladies rose and made their way back to the hotel.

Eleanor bestowed extra pains on her toilet that evening, and when she descended to the dining-room she was in a flutter of excitement in the expectation of seeing Arthur Mingay; but when they were seated she looked round in vain for his stalwart figure and handsome face. But she had not long to wait, and then he came in and took a vacant seat some distance from her and her party.

"There," said Mrs. Burstall, "that's him—Mr. Cyril Thornton, you know."

"Yes," responded Eleanor, "I see him."

Several times as the gentleman in question glanced across the table, their eyes met, but he made no sign of recognition. Eleanor's heart sank within her. Did he mean to ignore her? Had his passion so entirely evaporated that he could look thus coldly at her, as though she had been a perfect stranger? She was disappointed. He must have changed

sadly to have forgotten her so soon, or had he failed to recognise her? He had taken a seat by the side of a lady who was also a new-comer, and they were chatting gaily. Perhaps he was married, and she was his wife! This seemed to clear up the mystery, and she thereupon became dreadfully jealous, and told herself that the lady in question was the most hateful creature she had ever set eyes on.

CHAPTER II. AT A CHARITY BALL.

IN the saloon that evening the great actor was the subject of conversation, and during this Eleanor learned two things which eased her mind considerably. The one was that the lady he had been conversing with was a perfect stranger, and the other that he was unmarried. All this was very soothing to her feelings, but still that did not account for his not taking any notice of her. She sat there full of ardent expectation, hoping every moment that the door would open and she should see his beloved form on the threshold. But he came not, and on going to the window and looking out, she saw him and another gentleman leaning on the rails, smoking, and gazing out on the moonlit sea. Presently they were joined by a third man, and the trio walked off, laughing and talking gaily; and, with a pang of disappointment, she returned to her seat. The rest of the evening was spent in rapid talk till bed-time came, and then she retired to her room and put herself into the hands of her maid, who wondered what had come to her usually lively mistress, and was half afraid she had done something to offend her.

The following evening there was to be a ball at the assembly rooms, the proceeds to be divided between the infirmary and other charitable institutions of the town. Everybody was going, and Eleanor and Captain and Mrs. Burstall among the rest.

Eleanor Brinkler looked, as she swept into the ball-room in company with her two friends, superbly beautiful. Her dress was the perfection of good taste. Her luxuriant brown hair rippled about her pure child-like brow, her glorious eyes were brilliant with anticipated triumph, her cheeks were delicately flushed, and she entered the room, amid a buzz of admiration, with the composure of a queen.

Almost as soon as she had entered the master of the ceremonies came up and

asked if he should procure her a partner, and her answer being in the affirmative, he disappeared into the crowd and returned shortly with a little gentleman, whom he presented to Eleanor as the Honourable William Guilmore, and having done this, and introduced them to a set which was forming for a quadrille, he again vanished in search of more partners. After a few inane platitudes, the little gentleman branched off into nauseating compliments, fixing upon Eleanor his piercing black eyes, and noting her embarrassment with satisfaction. But as his florid flattery became more obnoxious, she drew herself away, and fixing her eyes upon him, said:

"I suppose I am not used to aristocratic society, and therefore I do not appreciate your vulgar but highly spiced compliments," and with the slightest of bows she turned and left him standing perfectly aghast with indignation.

She was making her way back to her friends when she was arrested by a lady who was staying at the same hotel, who drew her aside, saying:

"You seemed interested in Mr. Thornton last night. Would you like to be introduced to him?"

"Yes, oh, yes, certainly!" and she was dragged away through a crowd, and then her friend whispered:

"Here he is!"

Eleanor lifted up her eyes, and there before her stood Arthur Mingay. Her friend was about to introduce him, when, with a winning smile, she stepped forward, and in her clear, silvery voice said:

"I don't think we need any introduction. If I mistake not we are old acquaintances, and friends too, I hope!" and she held out her hand; then with a glance at the actor, who seemed rather taken aback, she went on: "I don't think that five years have so altered me that Mr. Thornton," and she laid great stress on the name, "will have failed to recognise in me the Eleanor Holtum of former days!"

"I really am afraid," stammered the actor, "that if I ever had the pleasure of knowing this lady, the fact has entirely passed from my memory!"

A hot blush suffused Eleanor's cheek. What did he mean? Did he intend to ignore and insult her? She was quite dumbfounded, and stood looking at him in blank astonishment.

The ball was over, and Eleanor had returned to her hotel. Exhausted with the

fatigue and excitement of the last few hours, she retired at once to her chamber, and drawing a chair to the open window, sat down to think. The grey dawn of an autumn morning was just breaking in the east. It was perfectly calm, there was not a breath of wind, not a sound was to be heard; all was hushed and tranquil.

Up to the time of her entering her chamber she had been suffering from a strange bewildering sort of surprise. The appearance of her old lover so unexpectedly had filled her heart with a wild longing which she could not suppress, and now this had all vanished. He had spurned and scorned her, and treated her as a stranger. She knew and felt that he had a right to be angry. Viewed from his point, appearances were against her. She had used him ill; she had jilted him, and had seemingly preferred a wealthy alliance to his strong and earnest love. But she felt that there was much to be said in her favour. She was very young, only eighteen, when she married. He had no income, no hope but in the chance of an uncertain profession. What could she do but sacrifice herself on the altar of filial duty? And now it was all over, and she bowed her head and wept bitterly. She did not think he could be so unforgiving!

Presently she looked up and wiped her eyes; the daylight was broadening, one by one the stars faded out, till only one, a solitary one fair and bright, shone in the western sky. All her bright dreams had vanished like the stars; only one remained—it was the star of hope. She sat watching it eagerly; the silken lashes of her soft eyes were upraised, and her sweet mouth half parted. A cool, fresh breeze came wafted across the calm, still sea; it stole into the window and fanned her cheek. A reverie of sweet thoughts and dreamy fancies crept over her, a sense of peace stole into her heart, and she sank into a gentle dozing slumber. When she awoke from this the star was gone, and instead the gorgeous tints of morning were suffusing the eastern sky.

CHAPTER III. ON BOARD THE "CYNTHIA."

THE following morning Mrs. Brinkler was very late to breakfast. She had had some hours' feverish sleep; but when she awoke she was in a sad and depressed state of mind. She knew that neither time nor absence had weakened her love

for Arthur Mingay. No one but herself knew how many times since her husband's death her heart had yearned to see him, and more, to hear his voice; and now that her prayer had been answered, he had turned from her and treated her as a stranger. It was very hard and cruel, but still she could not help loving him, how deeply and passionately she had never previously realised. But to see him again after his coldness on the previous evening, to see him at the table d'hôte flirting with that odious woman as he did yesterday, was more than she could endure; so she decided to pack up her traps and leave Ufford's Bay at once.

At this moment Mrs. Burstall entered the room, and after giving Eleanor a warm kiss, said:

"I have got an invitation for you if you like to accept it. Sir George and Lady Smithson have invited Charles and me to go for a cruise in their yacht, and Lady Smithson further hints that if you would care to accept it we may extend the invitation to you. What do you say?"

"That I shall be delighted!" replied Eleanor. "I'm tired of this place for one thing, and in the other I'm very fond of the sea."

"That's right, then; and now, when can you be ready?"

"In an hour!"

"No, no; there's no train to Exeter till half-past one, and it's only half an hour's ride to the station. I'll order a carriage for half-past twelve; will that suit you?"

"Yes."

"Oh!" cried Mrs. Burstall, turning back, "I forgot to tell you, Lady Smithson says you will find an old friend on board who, as well as Sir George and her, will be delighted to give you a welcome."

"An old friend! Who can it be?" questioned Mrs. Brinkler.

Mrs. Burstall shook her head. "I don't know. Haven't the slightest idea. One of your old flames, I expect!"

The sun was smiling serenely on the almost calm waters of the Solent, and the "Cynthia" lay at anchor off Cowes with her steam up. The weather was superbly fine; the sea, just ruffled into wavelets by a soft southerly breeze, was bathed in the full radiance of a meridian sun.

Eleanor and Mrs. Burstall, with her good and amiable husband, seated in a smart gig manned by four stalwart yachts-

men, were being pulled rapidly but almost noiselessly towards the yacht. As they approached her they saw Sir George and his wife and a tall gentleman standing by the gangway ready to welcome them.

"Eleanor!" whispered Mrs. Burstall, "do you see who that is? That's Mr. Thornton!"

"Good gracious!" cried her friend, "what shall I do? Can't we turn back?"

"Turn back? What for?" asked the Captain.

"Because I'd rather not go if that Mr. Thornton is on board. My chief reason for leaving Ufford's Bay was that I might not meet him again," replied Eleanor.

"Too late, my dear lady, too late," cried the Captain. "All you've got to do is to give him the cold shoulder, and I'll see that you are not annoyed."

Eleanor sprang lightly on board, and was kindly greeted by Sir George and Lady Smithson; and then Arthur Mingay stepped forward with extended hand, evidently with the same intention. But Eleanor swept past him with haughty bow, and he fell back and looked at Lady Smithson with a troubled brow. She only smiled back at him as she conducted her new guest below, and directed all things for her comfort and convenience.

Meantime, the anchor had been weighed, and the yacht was steaming away towards the Channel.

Arthur Mingay was leaning on the bulwark dazed and stupefied. What could it mean? In all these past years he had cherished the idea that, notwithstanding the adverse circumstances that had separated them, she still loved him, and now she had passed by him with an icy indifference which stung him to the quick.

Eleanor, as she sat in her cabin, knew that all this was only too true. But he had scorned her, refused to recognise her, and her pride forbade her to forgive him without apology or explanation. What was to her strange and inexplicable was his sudden change of manner. At Ufford's Bay he had started, with well-feigned surprise, when she claimed him as an old acquaintance and friend, and now, only two days after, when she stepped on board the yacht, he had extended his hand and met her with all his old eagerness. What did it mean? Were there two Arthur Mingays—the one cold and callous, and the other eager and expectant; the one staring at her with vacuous indifference, and the other gazing at her with eyes full of love

and admiration? It was a strange puzzle, and she could find no solution to it.

At this moment there came a tap at the door, and Mrs. Burstall entered with a face beaming with good-nature and excitement.

"Such a curious thing, dear," she said; "that gentleman I took for Mr. Thornton is a Mr. Arthur Mingay."

"Of course; I knew that. I told you at Ufford's Bay that Thornton was not his real name."

"I know; but this gentleman is not the one we saw at Ufford's Bay."

"Oh, that's nonsense!" said Eleanor petulantly. "Does he think he can bamboozle me in that way?"

"But Sir George says that Mr. Mingay has been on board the yacht for more than a week, and, therefore, the man we saw at Ufford's Bay must have been a different person!"

Eleanor stared at her in astonishment.

"If Sir George says that, of course it must be true," she said. "But I can hardly believe that two persons could be so exactly alike."

"Neither could I," responded Mrs. Burstall. "But now, my dear, what's to be done?"

"Well, I must explain matters to him and apologise."

"There is no need of that. He quite understands the situation." There was a pause, and then she said: "Now come on deck."

So Mrs. Brinkler put on her hat and followed her friend.

It was a splendid night; the sea, calm as a lake, was gilded by the full radiance of the moon. Swiftly and almost noiselessly the "Cynthia" steamed on through the dark waters, which sparkled in the moonlight.

Arthur Mingay and Eleanor Brinkler were reclining in two wicker chairs, talking in low, musical tones. All had been explained and all had been forgiven.

In Eleanor's eyes there flashed the light of a great happiness, and her beautiful lips curved in a victorious smile as she gazed into his handsome face.

"What are you smiling at, darling?" questioned Arthur, breaking the pause.

"I was thinking what a lucky chance it was that Lady Smithson asked me to accompany her on this cruise. Don't you think so, dear?"

"Yes, wasn't it!" and he laughed quietly.

He did not tell her that the whole thing had been arranged by him and Sir George, and that Lady Smithson had been an unconscious instrument in carrying out his scheme.

"You see, darling," she continued, "I did not know you were in England, and it might have been years before we met but for this happy accident; especially after that contretemps with Mr. Thornton at Ufford's Bay."

"Just so!" he said musingly. "It's the most curious piece of business I ever heard of. The resemblance must have been very great for three people to be taken in by it. Captain and Mrs. Burstall were quite angry when I said I had never seen them before, and had never been to Ufford's Bay. I know they thought I was telling them an abominable lie!"

"Never mind that now, dear," she said softly; "I want to forget all about it. I was so dreadfully miserable!"

"But you are not miserable now, darling?" he said.

"No, you dear old goose, not now that I have really found you!"

Arthur smiled, and bent down and kissed her.

BY THE BANKS OF THE AVON.

CHAPTER I.

THE autumn sunrays were falling redly on the peaked grey gables and mullioned windows of Hinton House, and on the lonely hills, clad thickly with fir and pine, that formed such a charming background to the old place, and the canal and river, the classic Avon, that ran along side by side through the romantically lovely scenery, with beech and larch and hazel-tree growing on the stony side of the cliff, which towered above the waterways, fringing its crest and standing out boldly, the delicate tracery of their foliage clearly defined against the cloudless blue sky.

Hinton House, once the Manor House and residence of the whilom lord of all the broad and fertile acres that lay around, was now, as a prospectus informed the public in general, a "Hydro," and any one suffering from gout, rheumatism, indigestion, want of sleep, debility, and kindred ailments, could be cured in this establishment by undergoing a course of hydro-pathy.

Mr. Vernon Weatherby, banker, of Lombard Street, City, and Rutland Gate,

S.W., glancing through his Bradshaw one August day saw a glowing advertisement of Hinton House. Gout had troubled him greatly all through the summer, and had indeed kept him a prisoner in town long after all his brother Midases had flied away to Homburg, Aix, Malvern, Tunbridge Wells, and other health resorts; and as he read the glowing account of Turkish, electric, Russian, sulphur, spray, and other baths, he made up his mind to go down to Somersetshire and try their effect on his gouty toes, and the remnant of liver which a too plenteous diet and a too great liking for Comet claret and '47 port had left him.

"Daisy," he said, looking across at his fair young daughter, who divided his affections with the "ragoûts" and the Comet claret, "I shall go down to Somersetshire next week."

"Somersetshire, father?" she replied enquiringly, raising her large blue eyes, and regarding his jovial but rather too rubicund face attentively.

"Yes, to Hinton House."

"Why there?" she asked, while a curious light gleamed in her azure orbs.

"Because I think it is just the place to suit me, just the place where I shall get all the medical attendance and baths I require," he responded pompously, trying to move one swollen member and groaning horribly; "and it will be a nice quiet place for you."

"It will be exceedingly slow," she said demurely, but all the while a little smile was trying to pucker the corners of her rosy mouth.

"Slow? Good heavens! What are the young people of the present day coming to?" he ejaculated testily.

"The grave, dad," she smiled slyly.

"Nonsense, Daisy; be sensible, my dear. You can take Dot with you, and that thing you call Popplechick, and what more do you want?"

"Well, I might want something more, though I admit that Popplechick is a host in himself," and stooping, she picked up a hairy ball lying at her feet, and caressed it rather violently, whereupon the hirsute animated ball sneezed several times with extraordinary vigour.

"You'll have the scenery to look at," growled her parent, "and if you feel dull you can amuse yourself by taking a Turkish bath."

"Thank you, but I would much rather not," she retorted with a grimace. "I

don't think I want them at present," and she regarded her blooming reflection in the mirror opposite with a considerable amount of satisfaction.

"Well, it is all the same whether you do or not. I am going there and you must, too."

"Very well, dad," she acquiesced with a hypocritical sigh, for the little rogue's heart was beating high with delight. Was not Adrian Harcourt staying at Hinton House, and would it not be delightful—delightful to stay under the same roof-tree with him?

A few days later as a group of men were playing billiards in the "Hydro," one of them paused in the act of chalking his cue, and exclaimed: "By Jove! what an uncommonly pretty girl!" All the men made a simultaneous rush to the window which commanded a view of the road from the station; for a new arrival was always an object of interest, and pretty girls, like angels' visits, were few and far between at this home of hydropathy.

Adrian Harcourt lounged after the other fellows, but when his eyes fell on the trim female figure walking beside the bath-chair, in which sat a puffy, pompous old man, he too ejaculated, "By Jove!" and immediately went out into the hall, and helped Mr. Weatherby to alight, offering him his arm. As he did so the millionaire looked at him.

"Why, Harcourt, what—what the deuce are you doing here?"

"Taking my holiday, sir," replied the young man with the utmost gravity, though his eyes had interchanged one rapid, significant glance with Daisy's.

"What, in a hydro?" ejaculated his employer.

"Yes, I felt rather run down, so I thought I would come here, instead of going to Scarborough or Eastbourne, and enjoy complete rest."

"Quite right, quite right; you're sensible. Here's this giddy girl of mine objecting to quiet."

"Ah, is Miss Weatherby with you?" said Adrian, affecting to perceive her for the first time, and bowing stiffly.

"Yes, and I warrant she'll want to run away before to-night's over."

But Miss Daisy Weatherby did nothing of the sort. Her little world was composed of Adrian Harcourt. Where he was she was satisfied to remain; and while her father was consuming a cup of sticky oat-flour porridge and a dry biscuit, all the

supper the "resident physician" permitted his plethoric and overfed new patient to indulge in, in company with sundry other old fossils, who were afflicted with various complaints, she stole out into the lovely grounds that surrounded the house, and led by the red light of a cigar, joined her lover on the upper terrace.

There was nobody near, and the autumn night had closed in; the halt, the lame, and the blind were engaged over their cups of various "foods," and busy fighting to get the best biscuits out of the little glass dishes on the supper table; and so Adrian tossed away his cigar, and took his little love into his arms, and kissed her sweet mouth a hundred times, and held her pressed against his heart, and felt he was the happiest fellow in the whole world.

"How are things going on?" he asked after a while, when his transports of delight had subsided somewhat, and he was pacing up and down the terrace with Daisy's hand tucked under his arm and her head resting against his shoulder, as though it was the most natural thing in the world for it to rest there.

"Not very well," she said, a little sadly. "Dad doesn't alter his opinions easily, you know."

"I know; and he still wants you to marry a baronet?"

"It's a duke now," she rejoined, "and that's better, don't you see. Because dukes are much rarer animals than baronets, and he'll have considerable difficulty in finding a suitable possessor of strawberry leaves. Some are too young, mere babies; others are too old, hairless octogenarians, while the in-betweens are all married, so I'm safe for the present."

"He'll import a foreign one," observed the young man dolefully. "They are more plentiful abroad than here."

"I won't have a foreigner," she cried. "I won't have any one but you, Adrian; you know that."

Of course he rewarded this pretty speech with a shower of kisses, and as the bright stars twinkled in demure silence, and the moon considerably hid her light behind a gauzy cloud, it didn't much matter, and no one was any the wiser.

"I suppose there is no chance for me?"

"I am afraid not, dear," she sighed.

"If only I had a fortune! I would dare to ask for this little hand then."

"Wait till I am twenty-one," she told him soothingly; "then I shall get what my mother left me."

"You won't be twenty-one for two years yet," he objected, "and then five hundred a year will be very different from the thousands you enjoy now."

"It will make a very decent income with your salary," she told him fondly; "and what we lack in this world's goods we must make up for in love."

"My darling, you forget apparently that I am a clerk in your father's office, and that my income is dependent on his goodwill."

"Ah, so it is," with a portentous sigh.

"He could turn me adrift at a moment's notice, and, unlucky wight that I am, I have no resources—nothing to fall back upon."

"We must wait and hope," she said sadly.

"And we must not despond," he added, assuming a cheeriness he did not feel. "Fate has favoured us so far. We shall be here together for a whole month. We shall see each other every day; and that is a joy I did not dare to hope for."

"No, Adrian, we must not despond; we must be happy in the present, and hope for the future."

But as she laid her head on his breast he heard a little sob, and he knew how hard his darling felt their lot to be.

CHAPTER II.

THE days passed away pleasantly at the "Hydro." Mr. Weatherby was in excellent good humour. The packs, the stewings in sulphur that he got, the electric baths, the sloppy foods on which he was fed, and the general régime was conquering his enemy the gout. He was able to walk out on the lower terrace, and sit in a sheltered corner and watch the trees as they rustled their brown and amber leaves, and the Avon, as it lapped and swirled round the buttresses of the old bridge, and he talked about fishing, his favourite pastime, looking longingly at the river as it wound like a silver ribbon between emerald banks, and he would jocularly declare that soon he would be able to drill with the rest of them.

Every morning a retired sergeant of the Bombay Fencibles appeared in the large recreation room, and put through their paces the halt, the lame, and the blind. It was a performance that afforded Daisy exquisite delight. She did not drill herself, not wishing to look like a fool, but it amused her to see tottery old gentlemen trying to keep on their bulgy feet, and stout ladies of mature age, panting, puffing, and becoming crimson in the face in their desperate and ludicrous efforts to emulate

the movements of the agile drill-instructor, whirl dumb-bells, and twist about sticks.

Then there were charming excursions to be taken in various directions. Daisy often rode Dot out to one or other of the pretty villages in the neighbourhood; and as her groom was frequently in attendance on her father, pushing the bath-chair, she magnanimously dispensed with his services and went by herself, because very frequently she met a groom on foot who was much more to her liking, and who was as untiring as any steed could be, and who kept alongside Dot and talked to her in a delightful fashion.

Together the lovers went to Bath, to see those wonderful excavated baths, which are such a monument of Roman greatness, and admired the geometrical ceiling in the ladies' baths, and watched the myriads of tiny golden carp that sported in the warm water and frisked about in remains of the first century, just as though it was an ordinary, every-day pond. Then they went to Tinsley, a quaint old-world village perched on a hill on the further side of the Avon, exactly opposite the "Hydro," and were delighted with its gabled houses with their mullioned windows, and its thatched-roofed, rose-clad cottages, with the yews and hollies in their trim gardens, cut into rounds, squares, pillars, arches, cups and saucers, and all manner of queer and fantastic shapes; and they went to have tea at the queer inn, with its low-pitched, mellow-thatched roof, and its curious mounting-stone and great iron ring above attached to the wall, to which in olden days the bluff squires or sturdy Somerset farmers hitched their horses' bridles while they went within to quaff a mug of the foaming nut-brown October or a tankard of mulled claret.

Of course Daisy insisted upon hitching Dot's bridle up, and, equally of course, Adrian let her; and then they went into the dark, oak-lined best parlour, which smelt so sweetly of dried rose-leaves and lavender, and the buxom hostess brought them in a delicious tea—white home-made bread, little pats of gold-coloured butter, a piled-up dish of bloomy plums and luscious nectarines, a big jug of thick cream, and a goodly allowance of tea.

"What a charming place!" said Daisy, as she sugared Adrian's cup of tea to a nicety.

"Jolly, isn't it? I say, darling, couldn't we be happy here—in a little cottage? Love in a cottage, you know."

"Very happy," she agreed, with a blush and a smile that dimpled her pretty face bewitchingly. "Only I am afraid we never shall be happy together, Adrian."

"Why, dear, is there anything fresh?" he asked anxiously.

"The Honourable Mr. Cholmondeley Travers comes down to the 'Hydro' to-morrow," she replied dolefully.

"Well, he is not a duke."

"No, not yet; but he will be some day. He is heir to the dukedom of Primrose Hill. The present Duke has no children."

"The dickens he is! Then has your father invited him down?"

"I believe so."

"To propose to you?"

"Ye—es," she acknowledged reluctantly.

"And what are you going to do?"

"Refuse him, of course, Adrian," she cried indignantly. "How can you ask such a question?"

"Forgive me, dearest," he said very penitently, going over and kneeling beside her, and taking both her little hands in his, "but I fear to lose you. Life would be such a blank without you."

"You will not lose me, dear," she told him reassuringly, running her hand through his hair caressingly. "I will never marry any one save you."

"But I shall drag you down to poverty," he groaned, leaning his head against her shoulder.

"Better poverty with you than wealth with any other man," she replied firmly; "and, Adrian, I think it would be better to put a bold face on the matter, and to ask father to consent to our marrying on the first opportunity."

"He will be certain to refuse his consent."

"I will tell him that I will have no one else. Only think how I shall be worried by this Travers man," she went on hurriedly. "He is an impecunious scion of a noble family, and to bolster up his house he will do anything, brave anything to obtain father's money. It will be horrible. In town he haunted me like a shadow, and here it will be worse, much worse, and he will watch us, Adrian. We shall never have a moment alone together."

"Then let us make the most of this," he said, fondly winding his arm around her little waist, "and I'll ask your father on the very first opportunity."

The next day the Honourable Cholmondeley arrived, and immediately attached himself to Miss Weatherby in a

most marked manner, keeping every one else away, to her utter and intense disgust.

She had gauged the man's character, and knew he was a coward, so when she rode out and he came to accompany her, she would give Dot's mouth a sharp pull with the curb, and the little animal, unused to such treatment, would kick and rear, whereupon Mr. Travers would make himself scarce, giving Dot's iron-shod heels a wide berth.

Daisy adopted this plan on the day several of the folk from the "Hydro" drove over to see Farleigh Castle. Adrian and some other men had announced their intention of walking, so Travers said he would walk too, and set out beside Miss Weatherby; but her mount instantly became so obstreperous and kicked so furiously that he retired immediately to a vacant place in one of the carriages, leaving the coast clear for Adrian, who walked every inch of the way beside Dot without the animal showing the slightest sign of disapproval.

The ruins of Farleigh Castle looked most picturesque, standing there grim and grey, bathed in the autumn sunshine, on the slope of a hill embowered with trees. Only the shell of a gateway remained, and above it was the crest of the Hungerfords sculptured in stone—a wheat-sheaf between two sickles. Portions of the south-west and south-east towers remained with walls of a thickness of eight feet, with narrow windows and embrasures, and part of a wall looking over a deep dell, shaded by a thick, leafy wood called "Dane's Ditch." Little else remained save the chapel, which was in a good state of preservation. They went down a small flight of steps to get to the entrance, and when the door was opened and they stepped into the dimly-lighted edifice, it was as though they had stepped back into the middle ages. The time-worn walls were hung with back and breast plates—dinted and marked from many a furious fray—with swords, and spears, and halberds, and morions, and helmets, and a variety of other deadly weapons and historic curiosities, relics of that time when Colonel Hungerford held the castle for his luckless master, Charles the First, against the iron usurper.

Of course they went and looked at the monuments, taking especial notice of the magnificent one of black and white marble to Sir Edward Hungerford and his wife, Margaret, and they went to the crypt

under the chantry chapel, and saw the leaden coffins containing the embalmed bodies of long dead and bygone Hungerfords tapering from the shoulders to the feet, with the features of a face in strong relief, seen plainly—for the wooden coffin in which they had been encased protected them for many years, until the damp of that underground vault rotted them, and they fell to pieces.

Daisy was glad to get out once more into the fresh air and glow and brilliance of the September day, and she enjoyed her homeward ride immensely, for by a little manœuvring the lovers managed to drop behind the others, and interchange some of those pretty speeches, those soft nothings so dear to young people as they went slowly through the lovely scenery.

"I am going to 'put it to the touch' to-morrow, darling," said Adrian, as he lifted her off her horse at the door of the "Hydro," Travers looking on with envious eyes, but not daring to approach Dot.

"Heaven send you good luck, dear love," she murmured back, "and grant us our happiness."

The next morning, as Mr. Weatherby was going down to the river—for he had so far recovered as to be able to hobble down to the Avon and throw a fly now and again—Adrian joined him, looking horribly confused and nervous, and when they were nearing the bridge he broached the subject next his heart, and in a manly, straightforward fashion asked the old gentleman for his daughter's hand.

Now Mr. Weatherby, though a banker, was a man with a pedigree as long as a mandarin's pigtail and as complicated as a Chinese puzzle, and his pet prejudice was "blood and breeding." Harcourt was a young man of fairly good family, but nothing out of the common, so the banker turned upon his clerk with a furious frown.

"No, young man; a thousand times no! I won't hear of it. I mean Daisy to marry a duke. So never speak to me on the subject again."

Then he turned his back on the unfortunate young man and began to busy himself with his fishing tackle. Adrian stood as though turned to stone, until the approach of Travers made him move off a

little; but he did not go very far. He sat down and stared blankly at the river. His life seemed to have come to an abrupt end, and he took heed of nothing until a loud splash and a cry for help attracted his notice, and he saw Mr. Weatherby's bald head bobbing up and down like a cork on the glittering waters. He realised in a moment that this ardent disciple of Isaac Walton had leant forward too far in his zeal to catch a member of the Avon's finny tribe, overbalanced, and slipped in.

Travers, who had been standing at his elbow, made no attempt to save his would-be father-in-law, only danced about the bank shouting frantically for help.

Adrian, on the other hand, kicked off his boots, divested himself of his coat, and plunged in, striking out boldly for that bundle of grey cloth with a pink top-knot that was being tossed hither and thither as the rapid river bore him along.

It was a sharp struggle for the young man to land his fish, for, when he seized the drowning banker, the unfortunate old gentleman held on to him with such grim tenacity that it threatened the destruction of both. To avoid so unpleasant a catastrophe, Adrian was under the painful necessity of ducking his employer's head two or three times, and then, having by this means rendered him docile, he slowly toiled ashore with him, and Travers's wild yells having attracted a little crowd, Mr. Weatherby was carried up to the "Hydro" and soon brought round between hot blankets and other life-restoring appliances.

"Where is he?" muttered the old man feebly, as soon as he opened his eyes.

"I am here, sir," replied Adrian, stepping up to the side of his couch.

"You shall have her, my boy. You are worthy of her. I like a fellow to be a man. Here, take her."

And the banker put his daughter's hand in that of her lover, while Travers looked on and gnawed his lips in silent and impotent fury to think what he had lost by his cowardice.

As to Adrian Harcourt, he never regretted having chosen for his wife the woman whom he won by the banks of the Avon.

ADVERTISEMENT DEPARTMENT.

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TABLE OF EVENTS, 1891-1892.

SEPTEMBER, 1891.

- 3.—The German Emperor and King of Saxony visited the Emperor Francis Joseph at Horn, and witnessed the Austrian Autumn Manœuvres.
- 4.—The D'Oyly Carte Opera Company arrived at Balmoral and performed "The Mikado" before the Queen and Court.
- 7.—Meeting of Trades' Union Congress at New-castle under presidency of Mr. Burt, M.P.
- 8.—At Doncaster, the Champion Stakes for two-year-olds won by La Flèche.
National Temperance Choral Fête at Crystal Palace, 4,000 choristers from various places in England and Wales taking part.
- 9.—The St. Leger, for which nine competed, gained by Sir F. Johnstone's Common, the Two Thousand Guineas and Derby winner, after a splendid race with M. Blanc's Révérend and Colonel North's St. Simon of the Rock, who were second and third.
Death of M. Jules Grévy, ex-President of the French Republic, aged 78.
- 10.—Common, winner of St. Leger, sold to Mr. Blundell Maple for £15,000.
By collision in the Mediterranean between the Italian steamer "Taormina" and Greek steamer "Thessalia," the former was sunk, and a hundred persons perished.
Extensive and most calamitous floods in Spain, causing loss of life computed at over 3,000 souls and destruction of property to an enormous amount; the catastrophe being described as unparalleled in the annals of the country.
- 16.—Cricket season concluded by match at Hastings between Gentlemen and Players; won by latter by an innings and one hundred and twenty-eight runs.
- 19.—Twenty thousand French working men, who had journeyed to Rome to pay homage to the Pope, received in the Basilica of St. Peter's by His Holiness, who made them an impressive address.
Suicide at Santiago de Balmaceda, the deposed President of the Chilean Republic.
- 21.—Fiftieth anniversary of the opening of London and Brighton Railway.
Sir James Ferguson, M.P., appointed Postmaster-General in succession to the late Mr. Raikes.
- 23.—At Leicester, the Royal Handicap, value £8,000, gained by Rusticus, beating Victorious, Enniskillen, and nine others.
- 26.—Lancashire Plate won by Signorina, beating Orme and seven others.
- 29.—Mr. Alderman Evans elected Lord Mayor for ensuing civic year.
Mass celebrated by the Pope in St. Peter's, Rome, at which 25,000 foreign pilgrims were present.
Consecration of Bishops of Truro, Lichfield, Coventry, Southwark, and Zululand, in

St. Paul's Cathedral by Archbishop of Canterbury.

- 30.—Suicide of General Boulanger at Brussels.

OCTOBER, 1891.

- 5.—Death of Mr. Charles Stewart Parnell, ex-leader of Irish National Party, aged 45.
- 6.—To-day also occurred the death of another very prominent public man, viz., that of the Right Honourable W. H. Smith, First Lord of the Treasury and Leader of the House of Commons, 66 years old.
At Stuttgart, aged 68 years, died the King of Württemberg, last of the German Sovereigns who were reigning when the Empire was proclaimed at Versailles in 1871.
- 10.—Private and unostentatious funeral of Mr. W. H. Smith, at St. Mary's, Hambleden. At the impressive memorial service in Westminster Abbey, representatives of the Queen and Royal Family, and many members of both Houses of Parliament and of the Diplomatic Body were present.
- 11.—The remains of Charles S. Parnell interred at Glasnevin Cemetery, Dublin, enormous crowds witnessing the funeral procession.
- 14, 15.—At Newmarket, the Cesarewitch, for which twenty-four ran, won by Ragimunde, followed home by Penelope and Lily of Lumley, all three outsiders; and the Middle Park Plate by Orme, who beat El Diablo, Gantlet, and seven others.
- 17.—Mr. A. J. Balfour appointed First Lord of the Treasury in room of Mr. W. H. Smith.
- 19.—Celebration of Centenary of Royal Veterinary College, Camden Town, at which Prince of Wales and Duke of Cambridge assisted.
- 26.—By an accident on the Lyons and Grenoble Railway fifteen persons were killed and fifty injured.
- 27.—The Strand Election resulted in return of Mr. F. Smith, son of the late Member, by majority of 3,006.
Death at Southampton of Lieut.-Colonel W. Hewett, last of the British officers engaged at Waterloo, aged 97.
- 28.—At Newmarket, the Cambridgeshire won by Comedy, who defeated Breech, Derelict, and twenty-six others.
- 31.—Terrible and most calamitous earthquake in Japan, nearly 5,000 persons being killed, many thousands injured, and property destroyed of incalculable value.

NOVEMBER, 1891.

- 1.—Destructive fire at Sandringham House, the Norfolk residence of Prince of Wales, the two upper floors being much damaged.
- 7.—Mr. W. L. Jackson appointed Chief Secretary for Ireland.

- 9.—Fiftieth birthday of Prince of Wales.
Lord Mayor's Day, Lord Salisbury making the political speech usual at the banquet.
At Sandringham, the Prince of Wales presented with solid gold cigar box, set with diamonds, a jubilee gift from the London Actors and Managers.
- 10.—Mrs. W. H. Smith gazetted to the Peerage as Viscountess Hambleden.
- 13.—Liverpool Autumn Cup won by Madame D'Albany, fourteen running.
- 25.—Sudden death in Paris of Earl of Lytton, British Ambassador to France, aged 60.
- 26.—By command of the Queen, Signor Lago's Royal Italian Opera Company gave a performance at Windsor Castle of Mascagni's "Cavalleria Rusticana" before Her Majesty and a large party of invited guests.
Death of Dr. Goodwin, Bishop of Carlisle.
- 28.—Manchester November Handicap, for which thirteen ran, won by Lady of Lumley.

DECEMBER, 1891.

- 4.—Death in Paris of Dom Pedro, ex-Emperor of Brazil, aged 66.
- 6.—Disastrous colliery explosion at St. Etienne, in France, by which seventy-two men lost their lives.
- 7.—Announcement of engagement of Duke of Clarence, eldest son of Prince of Wales, to Princess Victoria Mary of Teck.
- 9.—Civil Service Banquet at Hotel Métropole, presided over by Prince of Wales.
- 12.—The large steel ship "Enterkin," from Hull to Brisbane, totally wrecked near mouth of the Thames, only three men being saved out of thirty on board.
- 16.—The Inter-University Rugby football match, played at West Kensington, won by Cambridge by two tries to Oxford's nil.
- 17.—Death of Dr. Harold Browne, Bishop of Winchester, aged 80.
- 18.—The Guion steamship "Abyssinia," from New York to Liverpool, burnt at sea, and passengers and crew saved by North German steamer "Spree."
- 21.—Death of Duke of Devonshire at Holker Hall, aged 83.
- 22.—Mr. J. S. Simonds appointed Chief Officer of Metropolitan Fire Brigade.
- 24.—Sudden death of Sir Thomas Chambers, Recorder of London, aged 77.
- 26.—Bank Holiday. The fine and mild weather which succeeded the thick fogs and intense cold of the previous week came as a boon to holiday-makers, of whom vast crowds were seen everywhere, and who crowded the theatres and music-halls to overflowing, as usual on Boxing night.
Shocking fatality at Theatre Royal, Gateshead, where a panic from a false alarm of fire resulted in one man and nine children being killed in the rush for the exits.
While shooting in the Royal preserves at Osborne, Prince Christian was unfortunately hit, and lost his left eye.
- 28.—Sudden death of Sir William White, British Ambassador at Constantinople.
- 31.—Destructive explosion in Dublin Castle, happily unattended with loss of life, one official, however, having a narrow escape,

as he had left the room which was wrecked just before the explosion occurred.

Death at St. James's Palace of Prince Victor of Hohenlohe, nephew of the Queen, aged 58 years. Deceased Prince was a British Admiral and a sculptor of much merit.

JANUARY, 1892.

- 1.—British barque "Childwell" ran into and sunk off Flushing by Belgian steamer "Noordland," and fifteen of her crew lost.
- 2.—At Blackheath, the International Rugby football match between England and Wales won by former by three goals to one goal and a try.
Death at Greenwich of Sir George Airy, formerly Astronomer Royal, aged 90.
- 4.—Duke of Devonshire unanimously elected Chancellor of Cambridge University, in succession to his father, who had filled the office for thirty years.
Funeral of Prince Victor of Hohenlohe at Sunningdale, Berkshire, attended by Prince of Wales, other Royal Princes, and many distinguished persons.
- 6.—At Melbourne, amid great excitement and after four and a half days' play, a combined Australian eleven defeated Lord Sheffield's English cricketers by 54 runs.
- 7.—Sudden death at Cairo of Tewfik Pasha, Khedive of Egypt, in his 40th year: succeeded by his eldest son, Abbas Bey, a youth of 18 years.
- 11.—Official announcement that the Duke of Clarence, eldest son of Prince of Wales, was seriously ill at Sandringham "from a severe attack of influenza, accompanied by pneumonia."
- 12.—The ancient and historic Abbey of Fécamp, in Normandy, where the "Benedictine" liqueur is made, destroyed by fire.
- 14.—About nine o'clock this morning, at Sandringham, after an illness of only a few days, died Prince Albert Victor, Duke of Clarence and Avondale, eldest son of Prince of Wales, and Heir Presumptive to the Throne. The calamitous death of this young Prince, who had just attained his 28th year, was the cause of profound grief among all classes, the greatest sympathy being everywhere felt for his Royal parents, and for the young Princess, who was so soon to have become his wife.
On this day also, at the Archbishop's House, Westminster, died the venerable Cardinal Manning, in his 84th year, deeply and universally lamented.
- 20.—Funeral of the Duke of Clarence in St. George's Chapel, Windsor. The obsequies were conducted with great pomp and full military honours, the service in the Chapel being of most impressive and solemn grandeur. The coffin was followed by the Prince of Wales, the Royal Princes, and a long and imposing procession of Royal and distinguished personages, all the Sovereigns of Europe being represented. Memorial services were held in St. Paul's Cathedral, Westminster Abbey, the Chapel Royal, and in the principal churches throughout the empire.

- 21.—After an impressive and solemn service at the Brompton Oratory, the remains of Cardinal Manning were interred at Kensal Green Cemetery, thousands witnessing the long funeral procession.
- 29.—Letter from the Queen to the Nation in London "Gazette," expressing her gratitude for the loyalty and affectionate sympathy evinced by her subjects in every part of the Empire "on an occasion more sad and tragical than any but one which has befallen me and mine as well as the nation."
- 30.—The great battleship "Victoria" went ashore on west coast of Greece, but was floated off only slightly damaged.
- 31.—Death at Mentone of Mr. Spurgeon, the famous Baptist preacher, aged 58.

FEBRUARY, 1892.

- 1.—The North German liner "Eider" grounded on the rocks near St. Catherine's Point, Isle of Wight, in a dense fog. Passengers and crew saved by life-boats.
 - 2.—The second of the three matches between the English cricketers and representative teams of Combined Australia was played at Sydney, and resulted in another win for the Colonists by 72 runs.
 - 6.—The International Rugby football match at Manchester between England and Ireland won by former by a goal and a try to nothing; while at Swansea, Scotland defeated Wales by seven points to two.
 - 8.—Sir Charles Hall, Q.C., M.P., elected Recorder of London, in succession to Sir Thomas Chambers.
 - 9.—Reassembly of both Houses of Parliament.
 - 11.—Funeral of Mr. Spurgeon, an immense procession of mourners following the coffin to Norwood Cemetery, the place of interment.
 - 13.—Death near Chichester of Admiral of the Fleet Sir Provo Wallis, "father of the Navy," 101 years old. The veteran Admiral joined his first ship in 1804, and was second lieutenant of the "Shannon" when she won her memorable battle with the "Chesapeake" off Boston seventy-nine years ago.
 - 15.—Great Demonstration of Salvationists in Hyde Park as a welcome home to "General" Booth on his return from India and the Colonies. Perfect order prevailed throughout.
 - 20.—At Edinburgh, in the International Rugby football match between Scotland and Ireland, the Caledonians were victorious by a try to nothing.
 - 23.—In House of Commons the motion for Disestablishment of Church of England in Wales rejected by 53 votes.
 - 24.—By fall of a factory chimney at Cleckheaton, fourteen women lost their lives.
 - 25.—The Court Martial assembled at Malta to enquire into circumstances attending the grounding of the "Victoria," found the charge of negligence against Captain and Staff-Commander "partly proved," and sentenced both officers to be reprimanded, the former severely.
- For fourth year in succession Colonel North's grand old dog Fullerton won Waterloo Cup, beating all coursing records.
- 26.—Mr. de Cobain, Member for East Belfast, unanimously expelled House of Commons for having fled from justice and failed to attend in his place when so ordered.
 - 29.—The great Championship Chess Match played at Havana between Messrs. Steinitz and Tschigorin, won by former by ten games to eight, three being drawn.
- Prince of Wales re-elected Grand Master of English Freemasons for eighteenth time.

MARCH, 1892.

- 5.—London County Council Elections, resulting in return of eighty-four Progressives and thirty-four Moderates.
- England victorious in three International football matches, defeating Scotland in the Rugby game at Edinburgh, and Ireland and Wales in games under Association rules at Belfast and Wrexham.
- 11.—Terrible fire-damp explosion in Anderlues Celliery, province of Hainault, Belgium, 153 men being destroyed.
 - 13.—Death at Darmstadt of the Grand Duke of Hesse, son-in-law of the Queen, in his 55th year.
 - 14.—Death at Pau of Viscount Hampden, who, as Mr. Brand, was Speaker of House of Commons from 1872 to 1884.
 - 15.—First meeting new London County Council, when Lord Rosebery was unanimously elected Chairman, and Messrs. J. H. Hutton and W. M. Dickenson, Vice-Chairman and Deputy-Chairman respectively.
 - 17.—Two men executed at Oxford for murder of two gamekeepers near Aylesbury.
 - 19.—Departure of Queen from Windsor for Hyères, in the south of France.
- At the Oval upwards of 32,000 persons, witnessed the final for the Association Cup between the Aston Villa and West Bromwich Football Clubs, the latter gaining by three goals to nothing.
- 21.—Mr. G. W. Hastings, Member for East Worcester, who had pleaded guilty at Central Criminal Court to misappropriating Trust moneys, unanimously expelled House of Commons.
 - 23.—Lincolnshire Handicap, for which twenty-five started, won by Clarence, with Acrobat and Linkboy second and third.
 - 25.—In House of Commons Mr. French's motion in favour of payment to Members rejected by majority of 165.
- Grand National won by Father O'Flynn, who beat Cloister, Ilex, and twenty others.
- 26.—At Stamford Bridge twenty-three runners contested the Ten Miles Amateur Cup, easily won by Mr. S. Thomas, Kildare A.C., in 53 min. 26½ sec.
 - 28.—The third match of Lord Sheffield's cricketers, played at Adelaide against an Eleven of Combined Australia, resulted this time in a most decisive victory for the English players, who won by an innings and 230 runs.
 - 29.—The German liner "Eider," which had grounded near St. Catherine's Point, Isle of Wight, two months before, floated off and safely towed to Southampton.
- London County Council fixed salary of their Deputy-Chairman at £1,500.

- 30.—Dr. Vaughan, Bishop of Salford, appointed Archbishop of Westminster in succession to late Cardinal Manning.

APRIL, 1892.

- 2.—Leicestershire Spring Handicap won by Favonius, beating eleven others.
International football match under Association rules between England and Scotland won by former by four goals to one.
The Stock Exchange point-to-point Steeplechase, run near Potter's Bar, resulted in Mr. A. J. Schwabe winning prize for Light Weights and Mr. Jefferson the one for the Heavy Division.
- 6.—City and Suburban at Epsom, won by Buccaneer, beating Trapezoid, Caterina, and nineteen others.
- 8.—The Oxford and Cambridge athletic sports at West Kensington attracted largest attendance on record, and ended by Cambridge being victorious by the odd event.
- 9.—For third successive year the University Boat Race fell to Oxford, who easily won by $2\frac{1}{2}$ lengths, in 19 min. 21 sec., fastest time ever made.
The House of Commons point-to-point Steeplechase came off near Kineton, Warwickshire, the prize for Heavy Weights being taken by Mr. W. H. Long, and that for Light Weights by Mr. F. B. Mildmay.
- 16.—Easter Monday. The fine bright weather which ushered in the first Bank Holiday of the year had its usual effect of filling all places of popular resort in and round London with immense crowds of pleasure-seekers, over 75,000 visiting the Crystal Palace alone. The success of the day, however, was terribly marred by a disastrous accident at Hampstead Heath Railway Station, owing to the fearful crush on the stairs leading down to the platform, with result that two women and six lads lost their lives and several other persons were badly injured.
- 25.—Véry's restaurant in Paris, where Ravachol, the notorious anarchist, was arrested, completely destroyed by dynamite, the proprietor himself and several other persons in the place being seriously wounded. M. Véry and another of the injured men died soon after in hospital, and were accorded public funerals, at which enormous and sympathising crowds attended.
- 27.—In House of Commons a motion to extend the Parliamentary franchise to women rejected by 175 to 152.
In Paris Ravachol and four other anarchists tried for the capital offence of having caused the recent dynamite explosions in that city, and he and one other sentenced to penal servitude for life, the jury having added "extenuating circumstances" to their verdict of guilty, for which they were loudly hooted and groaned at.
- 29.—Terribly disastrous hurricane in Island of Mauritius, described as the most fatal and calamitous event that ever occurred in the Colony, over twelve hundred persons being killed, and an immense number of others injured. The damage to houses, public buildings, and to the sugar crops

and shipping was enormous, one-third of Port Louis, the capital, being utterly destroyed, and thousands of the inhabitants rendered homeless and destitute.

- 30.—Annual Banquet of the Royal Academy.

MAY, 1892.

- 1.—Great and orderly demonstration of the Eight Hours Labour League in Hyde Park; half a million of people estimated present.
- 2.—Return of the Queen to Windsor, after an absence of six weeks.
Universal Cookery and Food Exhibition at Portman Rooms opened by Lord Mayor.
- 4.—At Newmarket the Two Thousand Guineas, for which fourteen ran, won by Mr. Rose's Bonavista, Mr. H. Milner's St. Angelo being second, and Prince Soltykoff's Curio third. The favourite, Orme, on whom the odds of 2 to 1 had been laid, went seriously amiss a few days before the race, and, fully convinced that the horse had been "foully poisoned," his owner, the Duke of Westminster, offered a large reward for the discovery and conviction of the criminals.
- 5.—South Eastern Railway Station at Dover almost totally destroyed by fire.
- 6.—The One Thousand Guineas won by Baron de Hirsch's La Flèche, beating The Smew, Adoration, and four other fillies.
Great Primrose League gathering in Covent Garden Theatre, under presidency of Marquis of Salisbury, who made a very important speech on Irish Home Rule.
- 7.—International Horticultural Exhibition at Earl's Court opened by Duke of Connaught.
- 8.—Scott's well-known Supper-Rooms in the Haymarket destroyed by fire during the night, four youths losing their lives.
- 13, 14.—At Kempton Park the Royal Two-Year-Old Plate won by Milford; and the Great "Jubilee" Stakes by Euclid, an outsider, who beat twenty others.
- 14.—Fiftieth anniversary of publication of "Illustrated London News."
- 18.—Newmarket Stakes won by Curio, after close finish with St. Angelo and Damien, twelve running.
- 20.—Mr. Deacon, an American gentleman, sentenced at Nice Assizes to a year's imprisonment for shooting a M. Abielle, whom he had found at night in his wife's apartments at an hotel in Cannes.
- 21.—Brazilian ironclad "Solimoes" foundered off the coast of Uruguay, only five men being saved out of a hundred and twenty.
- 22.—The notorious malefactor Frederick Deeming hanged at Melbourne, his latest crime being the murder of his wife there last Christmas.
- 24.—Seventy-third birthday of the Queen.
Prince George, only surviving son of Prince of Wales, created Duke of York, Earl of Inverness, and Baron Killarney.
In House of Commons, in fullest House of present session, the second reading of the Irish Local Government Bill carried by a large majority, the numbers being 339 to 247.

- 25.—Sudden death at Wiesbaden of Sir Charles Butt, President of Probate, Divorce, and Admiralty Court, aged 61 years.
- 26.—Celebration of Golden Wedding of King and Queen of Denmark at Copenhagen, the Emperor and Empress of Russia, King and Queen of Greece, and Prince and Princess of Wales, and their families, being among the numerous Royal and illustrious guests assembled to do honour to the occasion.
- Union Company's steamship "Scot" arrived at Southampton from Cape Town in 14 days 11½ hours, best time ever made, her speed averaging 17½ knots.
- 29.—French Derby won by *Chêne Royal*.
- 30.—Mr. Justice Jeune appointed President of Probate and Divorce Court.
- At the National Sporting Club, Peter Jackson, a black pugilist, defeated Frank Slavin, the Australian boxer, in glove fight, after ten rounds severe fighting.
- 31.—In House of Commons the hitherto always successful motion for an adjournment over Derby Day rejected by 158 to 144.
- Terrible fire in the Przibram Silver Mine, near Prague, Bohemia, causing the loss of nearly four hundred lives.

JUNE, 1892.

- 1.—In splendid weather the race for the Derby, for which thirteen ran, resulted in the unexpected victory of Lord Bradford's Sir Hugo, who started at 40 to 1, the favourite, *La Flèche*, owned by Baron de Hirsch, being a good second, and M. Blanc's *Bucentaure*, against whose chance the extreme odds of 100 to 1 were laid, finishing close up.
- Termination of the great strike of Durham colliers, after lasting twelve weeks.
- 3.—The Oaks, for which only seven started, won by *La Flèche* by a short head from *The Smew*, with *Lady Hermit* third.
- 5.—Calamitous floods and fires in the Pittsburgh oil region, Titusville and Oil City being partially destroyed, with loss of life computed at 200 souls.
- 6.—Whit Monday. Magnificent weather favoured Bank Holiday, of which fullest advantage was taken by the thousands of holiday-makers, who crowded all places of favourite resort in or about the town, or availed themselves of river, road, or rail for a day's outing in the country.
- 7.—Arrival of the Czar at Kiel on a visit to the German Emperor.
- 10.—Manchester Cup won by Balmoral, sixteen starting.
- 11.—At Cambridge the Duke of Devonshire formally inaugurated Chancellor of the University, and conferred honorary degrees upon fifteen distinguished men, the Duke of Edinburgh being one of the number.
- 12.—Grand Prix de Paris, value £10,040, for which ten ran, gained by *Rueil*, with *Courlis* and *Chêne Royal* second and third. No English horses competed.
- 14.—Fatal accident on Great Eastern Railway at Bishopsgate, one workman's train dashing into another which had come to a standstill at the station, five men losing their

- lives and fifty being injured. At the inquest two signalmen were severely censured.
- 14, 17.—At Ascot the Prince of Wales's Stakes won by *Martagon*; Ascot Stakes by *Billow*; Royal Hunt Cup, for which twenty-four started, by *Suspender*; Gold Cup by *Buccaneer*, his only opponent being *Ermaok*; Wokingham Stakes by *Hildebert*, in a field of twenty-two; and the rich *Hardwicke Stakes* by *St. Damien*.
- 17.—Prince George of Wales took his seat in the House of Lords as Duke of York.
- Under the presidency of Duke of Abercorn, nearly twelve thousand delegates from all parts of the province attended the Ulster Unionist Convention at Belfast to protest against Mr. Gladstone's Home Rule Scheme. The utmost enthusiasm and unanimity, as well as perfect order, characterised the proceedings at this great assemblage, as also at the immense outdoor demonstration which followed.
- 18.—Seventy-seventh anniversary of Waterloo.
- 20.—Fifty-fifth anniversary of Queen's accession.
- Arrival of King and Queen of Italy in Berlin on visit to German Emperor.
- 22.—Instalment at Dover of Marquis of Dufferin as Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports, in succession to late Right Hon. W. H. Smith.
- 23.—Great Unionist Convention in Dublin of the three southern provinces of Ireland to protest against Irish Home Rule.
- 25.—Colonel Cody's Wild West Troupe gave a performance in Windsor Home Park before the Queen and Court.
- 27.—Queen visited Aldershot, and after laying foundation stone of new Garrison Church, reviewed the troops of the Division, numbering nearly 16,000 of all arms.
- Arrival in London of King of Roumania on visit to the Queen.
- 28.—Fifty-fourth anniversary of Queen's coronation.
- Dissolution of Parliament.
- Resignation of Lord Rosebery of Chairmanship of London County Council.
- Fatal balloon accident at Crystal Palace. The aerostat, in which were Captain Dale, his young son, and two gentlemen, after reaching a height of about 600 feet, collapsed and fell, the Captain being killed on the spot, and the others sustaining terrible injuries, one, Mr. Shadbolt, dying in hospital shortly after.

JULY, 1892.

- 1.—The "City of Chicago" from New York to Liverpool, wrecked on Irish coast in dense fog; passengers and crew all saved.
- 2.—University Cricket Match won by Oxford.
- 4.—Lawn Tennis Championship won by Mr. Baddeley, who again beat Mr. J. Pim.
- 6.—At Lord's, Players defeated Gentlemen by an innings and 26 runs.
- Celebration of tercentenary anniversary of Dublin University.
- 7.—At Henley the Diamond Sculls gained for first time by a foreigner, Mr. Ooms, of Amsterdam, beating Mr. Boyd, of Trinity College, Dublin, in final heat.

- 8, 9.—Terrible conflagration at St. John's, Newfoundland, two-thirds of city, including cathedral and many public buildings, being destroyed, some lives lost, and about eight thousand persons left homeless. The money loss exceeded two millions sterling.
- 9.—Disastrous boiler explosion on saloon steamer "Mont Blanc" at Ouchy, on Lake of Geneva, twenty-six persons being killed and forty injured.
- 10.—Eton and Harrow cricket match won by Harrow by sixty-four runs.
- 11.—Ravachol, the notorious anarchist and dynamiter, guillotined at Mont Brison, in France, for a murder committed over a year ago.
- 12.—Mr. John Hutton elected Chairman of the London County Council in succession to Lord Rosebery.
Appalling disaster at St. Gervais-les-Bains, near Chamounix, where three large bathing establishments were overwhelmed by a flooded torrent, and a hundred and sixty persons perished.
- 13.—In return match at the Oval, Players again beat Gentlemen, winning by ten wickets.
- 14.—Duke of Connaught opened new water supply at Liverpool from Lake Vyrnwy, which took eleven years to construct, and cost two and a half millions.
- 15.—At Sandhurst Park, amid great enthusiasm, the Eclipse Stakes of £10,000 won by Orme, who beat Orvieto, St. Damien, and four others.
The Wingfield Sculls won by Mr. V. Nickalls, his opponents being Messrs. Kennedy and Cumming.
- 16.—News arrived that owing to volcanic eruption the Island of Sangir, near the Philippines, had been partially destroyed, and two thousand persons killed.
- 21.—Diplomatic relations with Morocco abruptly broken off in consequence of the hostile attitude assumed at Fez towards the British Mission.
- 22.—Liverpool Cup won by Nunthorpe, nine running.
- 23.—At Bisley, Queen's Prize of £250 and gold badge and medal, won by Major Pollock, 3rd Renfrew.
- 26, 28.—At Goodwood, the Stewards' Cup won by Marvel, thirty running; Goodwood Stakes by Ralph Neville; Sussex Stakes by Orme; Cup by Martagon; and Prince of Wales's Stakes by Silene.
- 27.—"The City of Paris" arrived at New York from Queenstown in 5 days 15 hours 58 min., fastest time ever made.
- 2.—Arrival of German Emperor at Cowes on visit to the Queen.
The Dunmow Flitch awarded to an octogenarian couple.
Annual meeting of the National Artillery Association at Shoburyness.
- 3.—Royal Yacht Squadron Queen's Cup won by "Corsair" on time allowance from German Emperor's "Meteor," which came in first.
Four hundredth anniversary of departure of Christopher Columbus on his memorable voyage.
- 4.—Meeting of Parliament; Mr. Peel re-elected Speaker of House of Commons.
- 7.—Departure of German Emperor for home.
- 11.—In House of Commons the "no confidence" motion carried by 350 votes to 310, largest division on record, the members present being only five short of full representation of the United Kingdom.
- 12.—Announcement of resignation of Lord Salisbury's Government, and that Her Majesty had sent to Mr. Gladstone to form a new Administration.
The race for the Commodore Cup of Royal Victoria Yacht Club, round Isle of Wight, won by German Emperor's "Meteor."
- 13, 14.—At Herne Hill, Mr. J. H. Adams bicycled 100 miles in 5 hours 4 min. 18½ sec., and at Neuilly M. Fournier covered 25 miles in 61 min. 21 sec., both records.
- 14.—While being towed in ballast from Glasgow to Liverpool, the new four-masted ship "Thracian" sank, and all on board perished.
- 15.—Mr. Gladstone visited Osborne and submitted list of the members of his Ministry to the Queen for approval.
- 17.—At Tredegar, a new model lodging-house burnt down, and eleven lives lost.
- 24.—Great Ebor won by Alice.
- 25.—Anchor Line steamer "Anglia," homeward bound, capsized in the Hooghly river, and thirteen of crew drowned.
Very serious outbreak of Asiatic cholera in Hamburg and Havre, numerous fatal cases having occurred in both cities.
- 26.—Terrible explosion at Park Slip Colliery, near Bridgend, South Wales, by which one hundred and ten miners lost their lives.
In the cricket match at Taunton between Somerset and Yorkshire, Hewett and Palaret, who went in first for Somerset, scored the record number of 346 before being separated, the whole innings realising the extraordinary total of 592.
- 30.—The Roman Catholic Total Abstinence League of the Cross held its eighteenth annual festival at the Crystal Palace, a great gathering, which included the Archbishop of Westminster, being present.
- 31.—Close of the first-class cricket season, Surrey being again left champion county, with Notts a good second, and Somersetshire ranking third.

AUGUST, 1892.

- 1.—Bank Holiday, with fine weather, and everywhere crowds of holiday-makers.

OBITUARY FOR 1891-1892.

ALTHOUGH not one of the great ones of the earth, CHARLES JAMBACH, who died on the 6th September, 1891, had considerable reputation as a dealer in wild animals, and his extensive store, where rattlesnakes, lions, elephants, monkeys, and almost every kind of bird and beast were on sale, has long been one of the institutions of the East End of London. On the 9th September, JULES GRÉVY, ex-President of the French Republic, died in retirement at the age of eighty-four years. In the same month died the REV. DR. SADLER, the editor of "Crab Robinson's Diary," and an eminent Unitarian minister; the REV. GEO. ROGERS, a well-known clergyman, at ninety-two years of age; and WILLIAM PARTIDGE at seventy-three, sometime police magistrate. The world of art lost WILLIAM THEED, a sculptor of some distinction, and SIR JOHN STEEL, R.A., Scotland, a veteran in the same branch of art, aged eighty-seven years. The last day of September was noticeable for the somewhat theatrical exit of GENERAL BOULANGER, who shot himself over the grave of his deceased mistress.

On the 5th and 6th October, two well-known figures were removed from Parliamentary and political life, CHARLES STEWART PARNELL, the great Irish leader, who died at forty-five years of age, and the RIGHT HON. W. H. SMITH, First Lord of the Treasury and Leader of the House of Commons, aged sixty-six years. WILLIAM ALEXANDER BARRATT, composer and musical critic, died on the 17th October, in his fifty-seventh year; and the last surviving officer who served at the Battle of Waterloo, LIEUT.-COL. HAWERT, died on the 26th of the same month, aged ninety-six years.

The 3rd November witnessed the death of PRINCE LUCIEN BUONAPARTE, aged seventy-eight years, nephew of the great Emperor, but himself of no other renown than as a philologist. On the 12th died the HON. LEWIS WINGFIELD, aged forty-nine years, well known in artistic and dramatic circles. MR. HAGGIS, deputy-chairman of the London County Council, died suddenly on the 24th, and the following day was marked by the also sudden demise of our Ambassador at Paris, LORD LYTON, who had previously held the high office of Viceroy of India, the son of the distinguished novelist, and himself, as "Owen Meredith," a poet of some renown.

December was marked by the death on the 13th of W. G. WILLS, dramatic author, of amiable and distinguished character, at the age of sixty-three years. DR. HAROLD BROWNE, the ex-Bishop of Winchester, aged eighty, died on the 17th, and the DUKE OF DEVONSHIRE on the 21st, aged eighty-three, the latter an event of some importance in the political world, as it caused the removal of his son, the Marquis of Hartington, to the Upper House. SIR THOMAS CHAMBERS, the City Recorder, died on the 24th, aged seventy-seven, and Christmas Day was marked by the

death of MR. WEIST HILL, of the Guildhall School of Music. Another popular composer died on the 28th, MR. ALFRED CELLIER, in the midst of preparations for the production of his music in the comic opera of "The Mountebanks." On the 30th died MR. W. H. DAVENPORT ADAMS, a practised literary workman, aged sixty-three years; and the last day of the year witnessed the death of PRINCE VICTOR OF HOHENLOHE, who as Count Gleichen had earned some reputation as a sculptor.

The year 1892 opened sadly enough. The death of the DUKE OF CLARENCE on the 14th January, aged twenty-nine years, on the eve of his marriage, caused general sorrow and regret; and the decease on the same day of CARDINAL MANNING, aged eighty-three years, added to the prevailing gloom. The distinguished orator and preacher, the REV. C. H. SPURGEON, died at Mentone on the 31st January, in his fifty-ninth year. SIR GEORGE AIRY, Astronomer Royal, died on the 2nd January, aged ninety, and on the 3rd died J. D. WATSON, an excellent artist in water-colours, aged fifty-nine. MARGARET, LADY SANDHURST, one of the leaders of the host of advanced women, died on the 7th January, aged sixty-four years. A well-known personage among caravans and circus tents was removed by the death of FREDERICK GINNET, circus proprietor, on the 12th January, aged sixty-nine years, and a figure still more familiar to the veteran frequenters of the equestrian circle passed away by the death, on the 13th March, of WALLER, who styled himself "the Shakespearean Clown," or sometimes "the Queen's Jester," at the ripe age of eighty-six years.

February was marked by the death of SIR MORELL MACKENZIE, the eminent specialist on diseases of the throat, whose services to the late Emperor Frederick of Germany will long be remembered. On the 16th March died EDWARD A. FREEMAN, the eminent historian of the Norman period, who was born in 1823. VISCOUNT HAMPDEN, ex-Speaker of the House of Commons, died on the 14th March. On the 26th expired WALT WHITMAN, the American poet, aged seventy-four years. The lamentable death of MR. GORING THOMAS, musical composer, author of the score of the popular opera of "Esmeralda," occurred at West Hampstead Station on the 20th March.

On April 2nd died JOHN MURRAY, publisher, third of that well-known name. On the 9th May LORD BRAMWELL died, who was born in 1808. July 12th witnessed the death of CYRUS FIELD, the pioneer of sub-Atlantic telegraphs; and on the 18th died THOMAS COOK, the veteran entrepreneur of travel, who was born 1808. ROBERT LOWE, LORD SHERBROOKE, once Chancellor of the Exchequer, Home Secretary, and a distinguished Parliamentary leader, passed away on the 27th July, aged eighty-one years.

On the 18th August died the famous prima donna, MADAME TREBELLINI BETTINI, born in 1838.

CALENDAR FOR 1893.

JANUARY.

1	S	1st Sunday after Christmas.
2	M	Mrs. Elizabeth Charles born, 1828.
3	T	Douglas Jerrold born, 1803.
4	W	E. L. Sambourne born, 1845.
5	Th	Elizabeth Griffith, novelist, died, 1793.
6	F	Epiphany. Mrs. W. E. Gladstone born,
7	S	G. A. Storey, A.R.A., born, 1834. [1812.
8	S	1st Sunday after Epiphany.
9	M	Napoleon III. died, 1873.
10	T	Miss Mitford died, 1855.
11	W	Katherine Phillips, poet, born 1681; died 1664.
12	Th	Arabella Goddard born, 1838.
13	F	Right Hon. Henry Mathews born, 1826.
14	S	John Cordy Jeaffreson born, 1831.
15	S	2nd Sunday after Epiphany.
16	M	Duc d'Anmale born, 1822.
17	T	Pierre A. Chermel born, 1809.
18	W	Lord Lytton, novelist, died, 1873.
19	Th	Charles F. Villiers born, 1802.
20	F	John Lilanell died, 1882.
21	S	Mdme. de Grandval born, 1830.
22	S	3rd Sunday after Epiphany.
23	M	John R. Herbert, R.A., born, 1810.
24	T	Charles J. Fox born, 1749; died, 1806.
25	W	Princess Royal married, 1868.
26	Th	Mrs. Frances Brooke, novelist, died, 1789.
27	F	William, Emperor of Germany, born, 1859.
28	S	Fanny A. Kortright born, 1821.
29	S	Septuagesima.
30	M	Mrs. Cibber, actress, died, 1766.
31	T	Marie Joseph Cabel born, 1827.

MOON'S PHASES.

2nd.	Full Moon	.. 1h. 41m.	Afternoon.
9th.	Last Quarter	.. 10 28	Afternoon.
18th.	New Moon	.. 1 28	Morning.
25th.	First Quarter	.. 6 27	Morning.

FEBRUARY.

1	W	St. Bridget.
2	Th	Purification. Candlemas.
3	F	Dr. Eliz. Blackwell born, 1821.
4	S	John Westlake, Q.C., born, 1828.
5	S	Sexagesima.
6	M	Queen Anne born, 1665; died, 1714.
7	T	Charles Dickens born, 1812; died, 1870.
8	W	Queen Mary born, 1515; died, 1558.
9	Th	Dr. Maskelyne, Astronomer Royal, died,
10	F	Queen Victoria married, 1840. [1811.
11	S	William Shenstone, poet, died, 1763.
12	S	Quinquagesima.
13	M	Lord Randolph Churchill born, 1849.
14	T	Shrove Tuesday.
15	W	Ash Wednesday.
16	Th	Countess Hilsen born, 1829.
17	F	Duchess of Albany born, 1861.
18	S	Marin Luther died, 1546.
19	S	1st Sunday in Lent. Adelina Patti born,
20	M	Duchess of Fife born, 1867. [1843.
21	T	Alice E. Freeman, Ph.D., born, 1855.
22	W	Adelaide Ann Procter died, 1864.
23	Th	Joanna Baillie died, 1851.
24	F	St. Matthias, Apostle and Martyr.
25	S	Sir Christopher Wren died, 1723.
26	S	2nd Sunday in Lent.
27	M	Ellen Terry born, 1848.
28	T	Thurot defeated and killed, 1760.

MOON'S PHASES.

1st.	Full Moon	.. 2h. 11m.	Morning.
8th.	Last Quarter	.. 8 12	Afternoon.
16th.	New Moon	.. 4 17	Afternoon.
23rd.	First Quarter	.. 2 14	Afternoon.

MARCH.

1	W	St. David's Day.
2	Th	Marie Roze born, 1846.
3	F	Thomas Otway born, 1651.
4	S	Eliz. B. Browning born, 1809; died, 1861.
		Mrs. Abington, actress, died, 1815.
5	S	3rd Sunday in Lent.
6	M	Du Maurier born, 1834.
7	T	St. Perpetua.
8	W	Sir R. Temple born, 1828.
9	Th	Anne Seward died, 1809.
10	F	Princess of Wales married, 1863.
11	S	Wilhelmine von Hillern born, 1836.
12	S	4th Sunday in Lent. [age born, 1825.
13	M	Sophie Craville born, 1829. Fraulein Dinck-
14	T	Admiral Byng shot, 1757.
15	W	Mrs. Kendall born, 1849.
16	Th	Duchess of Kent died, 1861.
17	F	St. Patrick's Day.
18	S	Princess Louise of Lorne born, 1848.
19	S	5th Sunday in Lent.
20	M	R. J. Poynter, R.A., born, 1836.
21	T	Dorothea Beale born, 1851.
22	W	Rosalie Bonheur born, 1822.
23	Th	Emperor Paul assassinated, 1801.
24	F	Fanny Sewall born, 1811.
25	S	Annunciation. Lady Day.
26	S	6th Sunday in Lent. Palm Sunday.
27	M	James I. died, 1625.
28	T	Alice King born, 1839.
29	W	Jane Elliot died, 1805.
30	Th	The Sicilian Vespers, 1282.
31	F	Good Friday.

MOON'S PHASES.

2nd.	Full Moon	.. 4h. 8m.	Afternoon.
10th.	Last Quarter	.. 5 14	Afternoon.
18th.	New Moon	.. 4 34	Morning.
24th.	First Quarter	.. 9 34	Afternoon.

APRIL.

1	S	Mrs. Scott Siddons' debut in London, 1867.
2	S	Easter Sunday.
3	M	Mrs. Spofford born, 1835.
4	T	Lord Kanyon died, 1802.
5	W	Jules Ferry born, 1832.
6	Th	Duchess of Cambridge died, 1889.
7	F	Miss Reay, actress, shot, 1779.
8	S	Madame Bodichon born, 1827.
9	S	1st Sunday after Easter. Low Sunday.
10	M	"General" Booth born, 1829. [1689.
11	T	Queen Mary and King William crowned.
12	W	Admiral Sir Provo Wallis born, 1791; died,
13	Th	David C. Murray born, 1847. [1892.
14	F	Princess Beatrice born, 1857.
15	S	Earl of Devon born, 1807.
16	S	2nd Sunday after Easter. Eclipse of Sun,
		invisible at Greenwich.
17	M	Zare Thalberg born, 1858.
18	T	G. H. Lewes born, 1819.
19	W	Primrose Day.
20	Th	Napoleon III. born, 1808.
21	F	Charlotte Brontë born, 1816; died, 1855.
22	S	Henry Fielding born, 1707; died, 1754.
23	S	3rd Sunday after Easter. St. George's Day.
24	M	Mdlle. Royer born, 1830.
25	T	St. Mark, Evangelist and Martyr.
26	W	David Hume born, 1711.
27	Th	Edward Whympere born, 1840.
28	F	Charles Cotton born, 1680.
29	S	General Boulanger born, 1837; died, 1891.
30	S	4th Sunday after Easter.

MOON'S PHASES.

1st.	Full Moon	.. 7h. 18m.	Morning.
8th.	Last Quarter	.. 11 35	Morning.
16th.	New Moon	.. 2 35	Afternoon.
23rd.	First Quarter	.. 5 26	Morning.
30th.	Full Moon	.. 11 23	Afternoon.

MAY.

1	M	SS. Philip and James.
2	T	Catherine II. of Russia born, 1729.
3	W	Invention of the Cross. Holy Rood.
4	Th	Charlotte Smith, poet, born, 1749.
5	F	Empress Eugénie born, 1826.
6	S	Cardinal Jacobini born, 1832.
7	S	Regation Sunday.
8	M	Blanche Pierson born, 1842.
9	T	Mrs. White Mario born, 1832.
10	W	E. Owens Blackburne born, 1848.
11	Th	Ascension Day.
12	F	John R. Hind, astronomer, born, 1823.
13	S	Sir Arthur Sullivan born, 1842.
14	S	Sunday after Ascension.
15	M	Michael W. Balfe born, 1808.
16	T	Felicia Hemans died, 1835.
17	W	Empress Catherine I. of Russia died, 1727.
18	Th	Alphonse Daudet born, 1840.
19	F	Queen Charlotte born, 1744; died, 1818.
20	S	J. D. Watson, artist, born, 1832; died, 1892.
21	S	Whit Sunday.
22	M	Isabella Glynn born, 1825. [1860.
23	T	Sir Chas. Barry, architect, born, 1795; died,
24	W	Queen Victoria born.
25	Th	Princess Christian born, 1846.
26	F	Capel Loftt died, 1824.
27	S	Princess Mathilde Buonaparte born, 1820.
28	S	Trinity Sunday.
29	M	Gerald Massey born, 1828.
30	T	Joan of Arc burnt, 1431.
31	W	Walt Whitman born, 1819; died, 1892.

MOON'S PHASES.

9th.	Last Quarter ..	2h. 24m.	Morning.
15th.	New Moon ..	10 47	Afternoon.
22nd.	First Quarter ..	2 52	Afternoon.
30th.	Full Moon ..	8 23	Afternoon.

JUNE.

1	Th	Corpus Christi.
2	F	Garibaldi died, 1882.
3	S	Madame Thoresen born, 1819.
4	S	1st Sunday after Trinity.
5	M	Adam Smith born, 1723.
6	T	P. Corneille born, 1606; died, 1684.
7	W	Charlotte, ex-Empress Mexico, born, 1840.
8	Th	Mahomet died, 632.
9	F	Mrs. Camilla Crossland born, 1812.
10	S	Clara Novello born, 1818.
11	S	2nd Sunday after Trinity. St. Barnabas, Apostle and Martyr.
12	M	Charles Kingsley born, 1819; died, 1875.
13	T	Helen, Lady Dufferin, died, 1867.
14	W	Hon. Caroline Norton died, 1877.
15	Th	Mrs. Harriet B. Stowe born, 1811.
16	F	Frances Brown born, 1818.
17	S	Louise von Francois born, 1817.
18	S	3rd Sunday after Trinity.
19	M	Rev. C. H. Spurgeon born, 1834; died, 1892.
20	T	Anna L. Barbauld born, 1743; died, 1825.
21	W	Madame de Mirabeau born, 1829.
22	Th	Mrs. Cowden Clarke born, 1809.
23	F	Catherine M. Graham, author, died, 1791.
24	S	St. John Baptist. Quarter Day.
25	S	4th Sunday after Trinity.
26	M	Madame Villari born, 1836.
27	T	Harriet Martineau died, 1876.
28	W	Queen's Coronation, 1838.
29	Th	St. Peter, Apostle and Martyr.
30	F	E. J. Hopkins, Mus. Doc., born, 1818.

MOON'S PHASES.

7th.	Last Quarter ..	1h. 43m.	Afternoon.
14th.	New Moon ..	5 51	Morning.
21st.	First Quarter ..	2 37	Morning.
29th.	Full Moon ..	6 25	Morning.

JULY.

1	S	Battle of the Boyne, 1690.
2	S	5th Sunday after Trinity.
3	M	Louis XI. born, 1423; died, 1483.
4	T	Madame Sophie Schwartz born, 1810.
5	W	Sarah Siddons born, 1755.
6	Th	Princess Victoria of Wales born, 1868.
7	F	R. Brinsley Sheridan died, 1816.
8	S	Percy B. Shelley drowned, 1822.
9	S	6th Sunday after Trinity.
10	M	Aphra Behn baptized, 1640.
11	T	Madame Regnier born, 1840.
12	W	Clara Louise Kellogg born, 1842.
13	Th	Charlotte Corday assassinated Marat, 1793.
14	F	Mrs. Margaret Lucas born, 1818.
15	S	Madame de Staël died, 1817. [born, 1766.
16	S	7th Sunday after Trinity. Caroline Oliphant
17	M	Dr. Isaac Watts born, 1674; died, 1748.
18	T	Madame Garcia Viardot born, 1821.
19	W	Duchess of Mecklenburg-Strelitz born, 1822.
20	Th	St. Margaret.
21	F	Matthew Prior born, 1664.
22	S	St. Mary Magdalene.
23	S	8th Sunday after Trinity.
24	M	Jane Austen died, 1817.
25	T	St. James, Apostle and Martyr.
26	W	St. Anne.
27	Th	Duchess of Fife married, 1889.
28	F	Mary Anderson born, 1859.
29	S	SS. Martha and Mary.
30	S	9th Sunday after Trinity.
31	M	Paul du Chailu born, 1835.

MOON'S PHASES.

6th.	Last Quarter ..	10h. 5m.	Afternoon.
13th.	New Moon ..	6 47	Afternoon.
20th.	First Quarter ..	5 8	Afternoon.
28th.	Full Moon ..	8 10	Afternoon.

AUGUST.

1	T	Maria Mitchell, astronomer, born, 1818.
2	W	John Hoole, poet, died, 1808.
3	Th	Christine Nilsson born, 1843.
4	F	Percy B. Shelley born, 1792.
5	S	Carola, Queen of Saxony, born, 1833.
6	S	10th Sunday after Trinity. Madame de Witt
7	M	Queen Caroline died, 1821. [born, 1829.
8	T	Emma Vely born, 1848.
9	W	Earl Sidney born, 1805.
10	Th	Mary E. Ropes born, 1842.
11	F	Mrs. S. M. B. Piatt born, 1836.
12	S	Lady M. W. Montagu married, 1712.
13	S	11th Sunday after Trinity.
14	M	Letitia E. Landon born, 1802; died, 1838.
15	T	Madame Scopoli-Biasi born, 1810.
16	W	Frances Mary Buss born, 1827.
17	Th	Madame Dacier, savante, died, 1720.
18	F	St. Helena.
19	S	Madame Pignocchi born, 1816.
20	S	12th Sunday after Trinity.
21	M	Lady Mary Wortley Montague died, 1762.
22	T	Sir C. F. H. Doyle born, 1810.
23	W	Queen of Belgians born, 1836.
24	Th	St. Bartholomew, Apostle and Martyr.
25	F	Elizabeth Montague, essayist, died, 1800.
26	S	Henry Fawcett born, 1833; died, 1884.
27	S	13th Sunday after Trinity.
28	M	Robespierre killed, 1794.
29	T	Joseph Wright, artist, died, 1797.
30	W	Jerusalem destroyed, A.D. 70. [1880.
31	Th	Wilhelmina, Queen of Netherlands, born,

MOON'S PHASES.

5th.	Last Quarter ..	4h. 23m.	Morning.
11th.	New Moon ..	8 48	Afternoon.
19th.	First Quarter ..	9 52	Morning.
27th.	Full Moon ..	8 43	Morning.

SEPTEMBER.

1	F	Margaret, Countess of Blessington, born, 1789.
2	S	Amelia Opie died, 1838.
3	S	14th Sunday after Trinity.
4	M	Sir Wilfrid Lawson born, 1829.
5	T	Queen Catherine Parr died, 1648.
6	W	Shakespeare Jubilee, 1769.
7	Th	Queen Elisabeth born, 1538; died, 1608.
8	F	Nativity B.V. Mary.
9	S	John Hollingshead born, 1827.
10	S	15th Sunday after Trinity.
11	M	Lady Palmerston died, 1869.
12	T	C. D. Warner born, 1829.
13	W	Madame Clara Schumann born, 1819.
14	Th	Moscow burnt, 1812.
15	F	Adeline D. T. Whitney born, 1824.
16	S	Anna Kingsford, M.D., born, 1846.
17	S	16th Sunday after Trinity.
18	M	Dr. Samuel Johnson born, 1709; died, 1781.
19	T	Hardley Coleridge born, 1796; died, 1849.
20	W	Battle of the Alma, 1854.
21	Th	S. Matthew, Apos., Evangelist, and Martyr.
22	F	Battle of Mycale, 429 a.c.
23	S	Lady Georgina Fullerton born, 1812.
24	S	17th Sunday after Trinity. Eliza Cook died, 1839.
25	M	Felicia Hemans born, 1794.
26	T	William Hazlitt born, 1811.
27	W	William Rufus crowned, 1087.
28	Th	Frances E. Willard born, 1839.
29	F	St. Michael and All Angels. Quarter Day.
30	S	Bermudez, President, Peru, born, 1836.

MOON'S PHASES.

3rd.	Last Quarter	..	9A.	42m.	Morning.
10th.	New Moon	..	7	5	Morning.
18th.	First Quarter	..	4	19	Morning.
25th.	Full Moon	..	8	23	Afternoon.

NOVEMBER.

1	W	All Saints' Day.
2	Th	All Souls' Day. Jenny Lind died, 1887.
3	F	Emily Ann Sheriff born, 1814.
4	S	James Montgomery, poet, born, 1771.
5	S	23rd Sunday after Trinity.
6	M	Princess Charlotte died, 1817.
7	T	Madame Wiegmann born, 1826.
8	W	Madame Marie Schwartz born, 1821.
9	Th	Princess of Wales born, 1841.
10	F	Oliver Goldsmith born, 1728.
11	S	Martinmas.
12	S	24th Sunday after Trinity.
13	M	Lady Jane Grey arraigned, 1553.
14	T	Anne Boleyn married, 1532.
15	W	Earl of Chatham born, 1708; died, 1773.
16	Th	Louisa Jopling born, 1848.
17	F	Accession of Queen Elizabeth, 1558.
18	S	Asa Gray born, 1810.
19	S	25th Sunday after Trinity.
20	M	Queen Caroline died, 1787.
21	T	Princess Royal (Empress Germany) b., 1840.
22	W	St. Cecilia. George Eliot born, 1819.
23	Th	Father Ignatius born, 1837.
24	F	Mrs. Frances Burnett born, 1849.
25	S	Giulia Grisi died, 1869.
26	S	26th Sunday after Trinity.
27	M	Frances Ann Kemble born, 1811.
28	T	King Alfonso of Spain born, 1857; died, 1885.
29	W	Rhoda Broughton born, 1840.
30	Th	St. Andrew, Apostle and Martyr.

MOON'S PHASES.

8th.	New Moon	..	0h.	57m.	Afternoon.
16th.	First Quarter	..	5	45	Afternoon.
23rd.	Full Moon	..	6	8	Afternoon.
30th.	Last Quarter	..	9	8	Morning.

OCTOBER.

1	S	18th Sunday after Trinity.
2	M	Fire of London, 1666.
3	T	George Bancroft (Hist.), born, 1800; died, 1891.
4	W	Madame Lemmens Sherrington born, 1834.
5	Th	John Addington Symonds born, 1840.
6	F	Jenny Lind born, 1821; died, 1887.
7	S	Miss Bateman born, 1842.
8	S	19th Sunday after Trinity.
9	M	Annular Eclipse of Sun, invis. at Greenwich.
10	T	William Minto born, 1845.
11	W	Mrs. Belya A. Lockwood born, 1830.
12	Th	Mrs. D. M. Craik died, 1887.
13	F	Mrs. Chapsone born, 1727; died, 1801.
14	S	Sir W. V. Harcourt born, 1827.
15	S	20th Sunday after Trinity.
16	M	Earl of Cardigan born, 1797; died, 1865.
17	T	Duchess of Edinburgh born, 1853.
18	W	St. Luke, Evangelist.
19	Th	Henry Kirke White died, 1806.
20	F	Battle of Salamis, 480 a.c.
21	S	Sims Reeves born, 1822.
22	S	21st Sunday after Trinity.
23	M	Sir M. Hicks Beach born, 1837.
24	T	Arabella Buckley born, 1840.
25	W	Mrs. Annie Hall Cudlip born, 1838.
26	Th	Dr. Doddridge died, 1761.
27	F	Amy Sedgwick born, 1835.
28	S	St. Simon and St. Jude, Apostles.
29	S	22nd Sunday after Trinity.
30	M	Adelaide Procter born, 1825; died, 1864.
31	T	John Keats born, 1795.

MOON'S PHASES.

2nd.	Last Quarter	..	8A.	19m.	Afternoon.
9th.	New Moon	..	8	27	Afternoon.
17th.	First Quarter	..	11	20	Afternoon.
25th.	Full Moon	..	7	28	Morning.
31st.	Last Quarter	..	10	42	Afternoon.

DECEMBER.

1	F	Princess of Wales born, 1844.
2	S	Queen Adelaide died, 1849.
3	S	Advent Sunday.
4	M	Frances Power Cobbe born, 1822.
5	T	Christina G. Rossetti born, 1830.
6	W	Caroline Bowles born, 1786.
7	Th	Rachel Bodley, M.D., born, 1831.
8	F	Mary, Queen of Scots, born, 1542; died, 1587.
9	S	John Milton born, 1608; died, 1674.
10	S	2nd Sunday in Advent.
11	M	Sir David Brewster born, 1781.
12	T	Nicholas Rowe died, 1718.
13	W	Duke of Rutland born, 1818.
14	Th	Princess Alice died, 1878.
15	F	Sarah Trimmer died, 1810.
16	S	Jane Austen born, 1776; died, 1817.
17	S	3rd Sunday in Advent.
18	M	Madame Colban born, 1814.
19	T	Mary Ashton Livermore born, 1821.
20	W	Frances Elizabeth Hoggan born, 1843.
21	Th	St. Thomas.
22	F	"George Eliot" died, 1880.
23	S	Sir George Denman born, 1819.
24	S	4th Sunday in Advent.
25	M	Christmas Day.
26	T	St. Stephen.
27	W	St. John, Apostle and Evangelist.
28	Th	Innocents' Day.
29	F	W. E. Gladstone born, 1809.
30	S	Elizabeth Gluck born, 1815.
31	S	1st Sunday after Christmas.

MOON'S PHASES.

8th.	New Moon	..	7A.	40m.	Morning.
16th.	First Quarter	..	10	4	Morning.
23rd.	Full Moon	..	4	37	Morning.
29th.	Last Quarter	..	11	13	Afternoon.

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CHARLES DICKENS.

No. 196.—THIRD SERIES. SATURDAY, OCTOBER 1, 1892. PRICE TWOPENCE.

MISS LATIMER OF BRYANS.

By ELEANOR C. PRICE.

Author of "Alexia," "Red Towers," "The Little One," etc.

CHAPTER XVIII.

IN CHURCH AND AFTERWARDS.

THE church at Bryans was large, handsome, and old, with a solid square tower. It had one of the finest east windows in the neighbourhood, dating from the fifteenth century, when Fulk Fitz-Bryan had added to the value of his gift to the Oxford monastery by filling it with the best glass to be had at that time. The lovely tints of brown, red, and gold were set in a sort of atmosphere of shining silver, which gave a strange effect of brightness and refinement to the whole of the high chancel, where three fine altar-tombs of Fitz-Bryans and their wives were looked down upon by Latimer monuments chiefly built into the wall, ruffs and painting passing on by degrees into the dignified classical style, with long Latin epitaphs to set forth the virtues of Poppy's ancestors.

In the late Rector's time the church had been furnished with open seats of solid oak, not particularly by his desire, but in consequence of Mrs. Latimer's influence on her husband. No very extreme restoration had been carried out, however, and this was a matter of placid rejoicing to Mr. Cantillon. All his own arrangements as to the church and its services were careful and correct to the last degree. His charming voice and scholarly reading often attracted people from the villages round, who loved to listen to him, hardly knowing what it was that they admired.

He and Geoffrey reached home on Satur-

day, parting at his gate with the understanding that their friendship was to last. On Sunday morning the Rector, a little pale and weary after his agitated week, looked down from his high place in church, through the arch of the old rood-screen, and saw the row of Thornes in their usual place near the chancel steps, on the left-hand side of the nave. There was Lucy at the end, dressed as plainly and practically as the Lady of the Manor, who set the fashion at Bryans more than she knew. Next to Lucy was her father, a tall, strong, heavy-looking man with a dark grey beard and intelligent eyes. Then came Geoffrey, certainly the flower of the flock as to looks, dress, and whole expression. Then his elder brother Frank, tall and heavy like his father, beardless and rather handsome, but dull and slow of look, though a little showy as to his clothes.

Geoffrey had two chief objects of interest in church that day, the east window and the Rector. He had half forgotten the beauty of those wonderful old shining colours, and he had never before seen his friend up there in his place—his right place, as it was so evidently. For no one could look and listen thoughtfully without knowing that the Rector's heart was there, that all the powers of his mind were there. He made people feel that he stood or knelt absorbed in one business—that of carrying their prayers into a higher sanctuary, a purer than earthly air.

Geoffrey began to know that his two last Sundays had been wasted. On the first after his arrival from Switzerland he had been tired, had slept half the morning, and had gone with Lucy in the evening to a district church on the other side, for the sake of the walk and of talking about Poppy all the way. On the second it had

rained, and instead of going to church with his father and Lucy, he had stayed at home and smoked with Frank in the stable. To-day it was a different thing. A living voice sounded now through the old walls that used in his younger days to seem so dead and cold. His feeling towards the Rector was strangely deepened by all that Lucy had poured out to him when he came home. She had given him "a piece of her mind," and he had taken it quietly. What did her indignation matter in the face of the fact that this dear and noble old man had actually started off in search of him, following him to Paris under the thin excuse of a visit to his oculist, which had never come off after all! Geoffrey did not say much to his sister about it; but she was more struck than ever by the magic the Rector had worked. In church he had never made much impression on her; he was too refined and hardly strong enough to influence her impatient and matter-of-fact nature in that way. But it was a mental resolve that she would never hear the Rector spoken of with disrespect again. And this meant a good many snubs for her brother Frank, who often said stupid things.

Lucy had laughed, though tears were not far off, when Geoffrey asked her what had made Mr. Cantillon think he was going to shoot himself. She explained the disappearance of the revolver. Frank, to whom it belonged, had taken it away to Oxford to be altered in some way. He had fetched it from Geoffrey's room in the evening before his brother came in.

There in church sat Geoffrey, unhappy to be sure, feeling often that there was nothing left to live for, yet remembering some words of Mr. Cantillon's spoken just before they parted.

"Well, my friend, sometimes, you know, we think that people are removed out of our reach altogether; and then, after all, something quite unexpected is put into our hands—something to do or to bear for that one for whom we think we would willingly give our lives. It may be a little thing, and yet it may make some difference to that one's happiness—one never knows. And so, if we can't be fortunate, at least let us be loyal. It's a kind of religion, you know."

At the time, Geoffrey thought this very cold comfort, and that only an outsider could preach in such a strain. Yet, even then, something in him responded, and he was coming to know, more and more, that

those were not words to be heard and forgotten. There was such a little thing, for instance, as finishing the portrait of her friend, which she seemed to wish for so much. And more things might follow. It would be "all in the day's work." The days must be lived through, the work must be done, and why should it not be for her?

His thoughts wandered a good deal during the Rector's sermon, though the kind, bright eyes looked down at him so often. But he caught sight of a face, nearly in a line with himself and Frank, but a little in advance of them. It was the face of Maggie Farrant, seen in profile. It struck him quite differently and far more suggestively than the face he had tried to draw in her grandfather's presence—the pretty head leaning back, not without a touch of affectation, against the dark old carved chair. He had spoilt that first sketch by the reckless touches given at a moment when he really did not know what he was doing. Would Miss Latimer like a profile as well, he wondered. The face as he saw it now reminded him of the work of some French artist—soft, vague, full of thought. It would be difficult to say what kind of thought. It was not Maggie Farrant as all the world saw her; but it was her face all the same.

The service was over. The fine strains of the old organ were still rolling down the nave, when, coming out of the west door with Lucy, he saw Miss Farrant a few yards in front of him, just turning down to the road. His father and Frank had lingered behind, as they generally did, talking to friends at the church door.

"Don't wait for me, Lucy," he said. "Go on with them. I'll overtake you."

"What? Oh!" said Lucy, finding remonstrance too late, for he was already by Maggie's side. "That picture again, I suppose. Well, if I were you I'd give it up and let the whole thing alone. I don't see why you should go on painting and slaving for a woman who neither values you nor anything you may do for her."

With these mutterings she turned down the picturesque path under beech-trees, which led into the fields towards Sutton Bryana.

Maggie Farrant had a very pretty, sweet smile, and her dark eyes were lit up with rather mischievous welcome when the runaway artist came up to her.

"Did we offend you?" she said. "My

grandfather couldn't make it out at all. Of course he put all the blame on me, and I've been feeling all the week that I have done something wrong. Do tell me what it was."

"No, no, nothing of the kind," Geoffrey rather nervously assured her. "I was obliged to go away for a few days."

"Oh, I know. Of course I know. I had a letter from Paris this morning. You have been saving lives, instead of wasting time on my picture. I only wish I had been there too. Tell me, is it quite, quite certain that she was not hurt?"

"No; indeed I don't think she was."

"And did she look very happy? And was he there—did you see him? Is he good enough for her? But he can't be that—can he?"

"You and I are not likely to think so," said Geoffrey.

"It's nice to talk to you," she said, lifting her bright eyes with a smile. "You admire her just as much as I do. Sympathy is delightful, isn't it? Not that you know her quite as I do; nobody in the world does. She says her marrying will make no difference, but one feels that it must, a little. Not much, because she is so noble, so loyal, as Mr. Cantillon says. She is like a queen in some old story, so stately, so harmonious—isn't that what you artists say? Now tell me more about the accident."

"I wanted to know what you would like about the picture."

"Oh, the picture; whatever and whenever you like, Mr. Thorne. It's rather a bore, but then it's for her. No, I didn't mean to be rude, and I ought to be proud of your taking all that trouble. Come a little way along the road. Grandfather always hates my stopping at the church-yard gate; he asks me if I have spoken to any one. I'm kept in very good order, even when Poppy is away."

Geoffrey looked at her with a kind of surprise. He said nothing, but walked slowly on beside her in the shade of the tall trees, past three or four thatched cottages where children were running in and out.

"Yes, I'll be very good," she said. "You may paint me whenever you like. Come to-morrow. But do tell me about the accident. How did it happen?"

"I hardly know," Geoffrey answered truly. "I saw nothing but a sort of confused crowd of horses and carriages, and she was in the middle of it, and a big

chestnut horse, a dark chestnut, a great savage-looking brute, was almost on the top of her; and of course I went in and fetched her out."

He stopped rather abruptly, with a slight catch in his breath. The girl looked up, her lovely eyes full of sympathetic enthusiasm.

"I envy you," she said softly. "I often wish I was a man. That is the sort of thing a man can do, and always will do, when we have gone in for all sorts of superiority, and suffrages, and professions, and things. Courage and strength are better than all that."

"Many women are brave," said Geoffrey; "and in this there was no courage, I assure you. It was only instinct. One sees the thing to be done, and one does it. That's not courage."

"What is courage, then?"

"I don't know. Something that takes a little thinking about. Endurance, perhaps."

"That's only a variety," said Maggie with decision. "Well, but don't you see, in some cases courage is not much good without strength. If I had been there on the pavement—well, I hope I would have risked broken bones for Poppy as willingly as you; but what could I have done? I shouldn't have had strength to lift her up and carry her out of it all. I should only have been knocked down myself. That comes of being a stupid, helpless woman."

"You need not regret it," Geoffrey said, smiling.

"But I do. How Captain Nugent must have envied you! I wonder he let her cross a crowded street alone."

"Miss Latimer was there."

Maggie laughed.

"But it is Poppy who takes care of Miss Latimer. Now tell me about Captain Nugent. Shall I like him? She says I shall; but of course she thinks so; and I believe I shall hate him, merely from jealousy. I'm rather miserable now, that's the truth. It won't be her fault; she's perfect; but I should be silly if I thought she would ever quite belong to me again. She can't, can she?"

"Of course, it will be different——"

Geoffrey did not know why, or how, but there was a certain bitter sweetness in listening to this girl's talk. Her face and voice were wonderfully pretty, and Poppy loved her. She would have been surprised if Geoffrey had told her that he almost envied her.

"Do you think I shall like him? Is he good-looking? Is he fair or dark? Tell me what he is like altogether."

"I had better answer your questions one by one. Yes, I dare say you will like him. Yes, I suppose people call him a handsome man. He looks awfully worn and tired; but he has been ill, you know. He is tall, and very fair—white, in fact. Altogether, he has nice pleasant manners, and looks as if he never could be in the wrong place."

"That is a good description. I'm only sorry he's fair. With her lovely fairness she ought to marry a dark man; they would set each other off. Not that I don't prefer fair people, for I do."

"So do I," Geoffrey could not help saying; and then he coloured slightly, for there was a mischievous smile in her dark, expressive eyes.

"I thought foreign manners were pretty," she said in a low voice; "and you have only been in England a fortnight."

"Forgive me; it's hereditary," he said.

"Well, I was just as rude, wasn't I?"

By this time they had reached the iron-studded, forbidding door of the old house at Church Corner.

"I won't ask you into the castle today," said Maggie, holding out her hand, "because the giant—that's my grandfather, you know—is a little fiercer than usual on Sunday. Poppy always says this house is like a giant's castle, with a princess shut up in it. I used to be discontented before she told me that, but now I think it's rather fun. Well, will you venture in to-morrow?"

"I will, thank you," Geoffrey said; and they parted.

He walked home rather slowly, though with the risk of being late for dinner, for he did not particularly wish to overtake his relations. There was no chance of this, however. They always walked fast, and were far on the way home before he had left Maggie Farrant at her door.

As they crossed one of those high, down-like fields which lay between the church and Sutton Bryans, William Thorne said suddenly to his daughter:

"Hallo! Where's Geoff?"

"He stopped to speak to Miss Farrant," Lucy answered, with some snappishness of tone.

"Did he really, though?" said her father, with some appearance of interest. "That reminds me—I meant to have told

you. Anything up in that quarter, Lucy?"

"What do you mean? I don't understand you."

"Come, Lucy, everybody knows you're the confidante," said Frank.

"I don't know what you're both talking about. I suppose Geoffrey is going on with his picture of Miss Farrant, and had to settle with her about it."

"Since when has that little lass with her black curly wig become 'Miss Farrant'?" asked Frank disrespectfully. "I thought she was Peg, or Mag, or something, all over the place."

"Only in the mouths of ignorant people," retorted his sister. "She is grown up now, and she is Miss Latimer's particular friend."

Frank broke out into one of the noisy roars of laughter which his family found objectionable.

"Don't be an ass, Frank," said his father. "Look here, Lucy, I meant to tell you, but things drove it out of my head; I went to see old Farrant yesterday about the rent of that field, you know. The girl was out, I suppose; anyhow I didn't see her. He was more civilised than usual, and took to praising up Geoffrey—said he was a good-looking chap and seemed clever. He has queer tastes, that old fellow, and I believe he rather likes anything with a touch of foreign about it. Of course he wanted to know what had taken Geoffrey off in such a hurry, so I said he had gone on some business of his own, and no doubt he'd turn up again soon. Couldn't say more, for I didn't know myself, you see. Well, then the old man branched off from Geoff to his granddaughter, and mentioned for the first time in his life—since I've known him, that is—that he was anxious about her, and would be glad to see her settled before he died. That was queer, wasn't it?"

"Natural, I should say," said Lucy, with some dryness. "Miss Latimer's marriage will make all the difference to that girl."

"So it will. I didn't think of that at the moment. Well, then, it shows some proper feeling in the old man. He went on and told me the girl would be pretty well off—which she ought to be, for he has been a regular screw all his life, nearly as bad as old Mr. Martin—and that his wish was for her to marry into some good, respectable old family where she wouldn't have to rough it, because circumstances,

he said, had perhaps spoilt her a little. I was rather pleased with the way he talked. Then he went off again on Geoffrey. I wouldn't say much, and in fact I couldn't, for he did not exactly speak plain, you understand, so I came away and left him. But I've little doubt, between myself and you two, that Geoff can marry that girl if he chooses. And, 'pon my soul, I believe it would be a good thing for him. He's been fooling after the moon long enough. All that nonsense has vexed me a lot more than I have said to any of you. Well, Lucy, speak up. What's your opinion?"

"My opinion is, that you and Mr. Farrant will make your plans in vain. If Geoffrey had any thought of marrying, which he has not, Maggie Farrant would not be the woman for him. Get the grandfather to make it Frank instead. Much wiser. Then he would have her settled near him for the rest of his life."

"Thanks, Lucy, my dear," said Frank. "I'm awfully obliged to you, but Miss Farrant is too much of a fine lady for me."

"And too little for Geoffrey," Lucy muttered under her breath. "No," she said aloud. "I agree with you, father. I wish Geoff would think of marrying some nice girl. But not that girl. She has nothing in her. Miss Latimer has polished her up on the outside, and taught her to read poetry and think too much of herself. No, we'll have something better than that for Geoffrey—something real, anyhow."

"Lucy's jealous.—You're hard on that girl," came simultaneously from Frank and her father.

Lucy shook her head; it was not worth while to defend herself.

They passed the high clump of firs and descended the steep grassy path towards the red roofs of the farm, from which the blue smoke of dinner rose in a slow column through the still autumn air.

A MOMENT'S PASSION.

A COMPLETE STORY.

PHIL DAYNTON was as susceptible as most artists in their twenty-sixth year. Still it never occurred to him that he might be imperilling his happiness, and Beatrice's, by just crossing to Capri for a week.

A week is but seven days, yet at twenty-five one may live a great deal in seven

days, especially if you include the evenings, with a bright moon to them, and the Bay of Naples for it to shine upon.

Beatrice and her mother remained at the Hotel Victoria in Naples. They were Falconers, well-known people, and Phil was engaged to Bee. She was a pretty girl, but after the colder type of English beauty. For instance, she was not prone to express admiration for things and landscapes, though she felt it. Her mother went to and fro, looking at what she was bidden to look at, and exclaiming: "Wonderful! What excellent taste!" and that sort of thing. Beatrice behaved as though her mother spoke for her also. Mrs. Falconer was a fine figure of a woman, and carried her long-stemmed tortoiseshell glasses with considerable grace.

But there was no doubt about Bee's affection for Phil, who was a cousin of a remote kind. Phil knew that this was so; for had not he felt the gentle pressure of her arm in his at moments of supreme ecstasy; when, for instance, they were listening to the music in the Villa gardens on a royal afternoon of May, or strolling up and down the Via Caracciolo at promenade time, with the crimson sunset clouds over the glorious Bay, Vesuvius a beauteous purple shade with a gold-tipped coronet, and the long headland of Posilippo enchanting as the arms of a siren? Yes, Phil knew his little cousin better than any one else in the world, and was content that he was to marry her when she was twenty-one.

As an artist of means, the young man was not compelled to sue Nature and his own artistic moods with crushing earnestness. He had about a thousand a year, and painted only when the passion was strong on him.

In Naples, strange to say, he had not once taken up a brush. And yet it was not so very strange, either. For they had lived in a fashionable whirl, with dinners and tennis in the garden of the Prince di Castro—who adored all things English—suppers at Posilippo under the starlight with the splash of the blue waves against the base of their supper-table, the theatre, and Wagner's operas at the great house of San Carlo which costs the Neapolitans so much to maintain.

How should the sweet spirit of art find a corner in his soul in the midst of this racket? It tried to do so now and again, when, for example, they sat on their hotel balcony and looked at the moonlight on

the Bay, and listened to the seducing melody of mandolins below them. But Beatrice was then its rival. Her cold little hands set lightly on Phil's sinewy brown ones banished it when it seemed likely to assert its noble sway.

And so in a moment of dutifulness to his ideals, Phil said, one day :

"I must go to Capri."

Mrs. Falconer declined positively to make this little voyage of four or five hours. She was wont to feel very ill during the crossing from Calais to Dover. Besides, the Bay of Naples has vigorous little waves at times, and the packet-boat is a mean affair.

"Oh, mamma!" sighed disappointed Bee—but it was no use.

That was how Phil came to set off by himself. He waved his handkerchief in the direction of the Hotel Victoria for several minutes, and then, having lighted a cigar, turned his attention to his fellow passengers and the grey angular shape which was soon to declare itself definitely as the witching island which Tiberius tried to make into a palace and a country seat both in one.

The passengers were what he expected : mostly Teutonic ; the gentlemen in German-made straw hats and coats fitting tight to the waist, wearing spectacles for the most part, with tin cases—for sandwiches, dried specimens, and so forth—slung from their shoulders, and very much absorbed in their Baedekers ; and the ladies enthusiastic enough to make him shudder. Two or three Britons in light suits lounged about, rejecting the addresses of the men who sell coral pins, tortoiseshell combs, and copies of Neapolitan "canzoni" ; but he did not feel drawn to them.

"I shall be rather glad when I have got through the trip," murmured Phil to himself. "I miss Bee already. No, thanks, I don't want any. I tell you I desire none of your things. Can't you leave a fellow alone, you beastly nuisances?"

These words were forced from him by the solicitations of the deck merchants, who showed surprising patience and assiduity. In the end they were repaid for their persistence, as usual. Phil, like many others, spent several francs in buying them off into another direction.

That night, however, in the Hotel Pagano, where you may see some wonderfully realistic frescoes on the dining-room walls—the result of Capri wine, Capri sunlight and air, and the exuberance of

spirits that possesses the artist in the island—Phil was fain to confess that he felt marvellously at home. He had drunk some excellent wine at the table d'hôte, not the ordinary table fluid by any means, and had enjoyed some lively conversation. His neighbour was a veteran Englishman who spent three months annually in Capri, "and mean to do so as long as I can toddle, sir." The gentleman, like himself, had a turn for art, and had taken Phil to his private room, and shown him his pictures.

If the young man had had the gift of mental analysis, he would have realised that his excitement was due in a degree to a certain one of these pictures.

It was a conventional enough study : a girl in Capri costume, with a pitcher on her head ; background, a staring white wall, with the sun and a lizard on it, and the crest of a palm-tree above the wall. But the girl's face won him in a moment.

Mr. Brabazon, the stranger, laughed when Phil expressed his admiration.

"She's young yet ; in a few years she'll be a hag. If you like I'll send round word that you'd like to have her for a sitting or two. It's a good chance, as five artists cleared out yesterday to take their canvasses to the show at Milan."

A sweet, if rather bold face of seventeen or eighteen, with eyes dove-like, and yet with the most alluring of slight smiles in their brown depths ; the lips just parted with the smile ; white, even teeth ; hands and feet and ears all small for a Southerner. Such was Carolina Certi, the model.

Brabazon seemed a trifle amused at the way in which Phil expressed his sense of the girl's beauty.

"Oh, yes, she's well enough ; with high spirits like all these Capri damsels. She'll be spoilt out and out by-and-by, and box a man's ears as soon as look at him ; but not yet. Her terms are ten francs the sitting, which is mighty good pay for her. She'll be a lass worth marrying in a year or two—for a Capriot."

Phil and this Englishman paced up and down the hotel garden between the rose-trees under the moonlight. At ten o'clock they parted and went to bed. But Bee Falconer's betrothed did not sleep all at once ; for the brown, ardent eyes of his model of the morrow were with him as he lay. He looked at Bee's photograph in a silver frame—which he was under a self-imposed vow always to take with him wherever he went—and then looked quickly away. It was rather absurd of

him, thus to be almost infatuated with a dream figure. But he had the artistic temperament, which has a wild, wayward will of its own.

The next morning he had but just dressed, and his coffee and rolls been brought in, when Carolina Certi appeared.

"I am ready, signor," she said, as she threw off her red and white gossamer shawl, and smiled upon him just as she smiled in Brabazon's picture.

Phil coloured, and gave her a chair by the window, with the garden of orange and lemon-trees beneath its balcony, and the lurid glow of the Capri sun on the roofs and rocks beyond. Then, at her bidding, he began to eat his breakfast, while she smoked one of his Turkish cigarettes, and they talked. The grace with which she puffed the perfumed smoke was as remarkable as the winsomeness of her face, and her extraordinary self-composure.

"I should like to paint you, very much," said Phil.

"Si, signor; it is easy. I am here. It is ten francs the time, and I am not restless. See, I fold my hands thus, and can stand—oh, so long, without even winking the eyes."

"I shall want you more than once. Let us say every day for a week—at least."

Phil spoke in a hurry. The thought that any one else might come between him and her on the morrow, and, by right of two silver crowns, be able to say "She is mine this day," the thought hurt him like the stab of a knife.

"That," said the fair Carolina, "will be fifty francs, signor; it is less by the week. And I will bring my meal with me."

"Oh, no," exclaimed Phil, oppressed indescribably by the mere notion of bargaining with beauty. "I shall pay you seventy francs, and if you will do me the favour to share my dinner—"

"The signor is very amiable," replied the girl, with a smile that was as warm and bright as sunlight itself. "It shall be just as the signor wishes."

"That," rejoined Phil, "is well, Carolina. I should like to call you Carolina."

How the girl's beautiful, dove-like eyes opened at this naive observation!

"I am always called Carolina," she laughed; "it is my name. It would be odd if the signor called me anything else."

Phil also laughed. There was no resisting such a girl.

Then he unpacked his painting tools, the girl all the while commenting on them,

and her experiences with the various artists of Europe who had already copied—or tried to copy—her pretty face.

"Some of them, signor, do not please me. They fidget incredibly. I am to stand one way one minute, and then they begin; but they are not satisfied, and they must stop and turn me round, and though I do not mind it much, it becomes tiresome, the signor understands."

"Oh, I will not annoy you like that," said Phil kindly. "I'm not a real artist, only an amateur."

"That means, signor, that you love to paint, but do not sell what you paint. Is it not so?"

"Pretty much, Carolina."

How the light played about the girl's eyes, and lips, and glossy long hair while she talked! Phil saw it all, even though he appeared to be otherwise engaged. When at length the easel was set and he had taken the crayon in his hand, he was trembling, positively trembling, for all his light words.

"The signor will like the left side of my face best," remarked Carolina, as she turned in profile. "It is often so, I am told."

"With you," said Phil, "it does not matter;" and content with the girl's own pose, he set to work.

He worked for an hour, and then threw down the crayon, and drew a chair close to the girl.

"Tell me," he said, "about yourself. With whom do you live, and do you wish to pass your life in this little island?"

Carolina folded her hands in her lap, with Phil's permission took another cigarette, and answered his enquiries.

"It has been asked of me before, signor. There was a large German gentleman with a beard down so low" (she put her hand to her waist), "and he was so interested in me that he visited the house, and drank the wine of my father's own pressing, out of our own cups. He was so 'simpatico,' and when I had sat to him for three days—only think, signor—he desired me in marriage."

Phil started.

"Desired you in marriage—and you, what did you say, Carolina?"

"Oh, signor, he was an old man, fifty; and my mother she laughed. And when he heard the laugh the gentleman went away pulling at his beard, which was gray, and he left Capri by the next steamer. It was so droll. But I have not answered

the signor's kind questions. My father is Giacomo Certi, and we have a little white cottage under Anacapri, where I was born and my three other little sisters. Is that what the signor wished to know of me?"

"Thank you, Carolina."

Master Phil strode twice up and down the room with his hands deep in his pockets. The girl thrust her head from the window and exchanged a few merry words in dialect with one of the hotel servants in the garden.

"Carolina!"

"Yes, signor."

"Here are the ten francs for to-day. I shall not work any more until to-morrow."

"Oh, but it is a very short day. I do not deserve so much money for so little time."

"Oblige me by taking it—and to-morrow, at the same time."

With a charming shrug of her pretty shoulders and a sort of curtsy, the girl then took the money, and smiled herself away.

When she was gone Phil continued to walk about, without casting so much as a glance at the canvas. This lasted half an hour, and then he snatched up his hat and wandered forth he cared not whither.

To Mr. Brabazon, and one or two others who got wind of it, Phil's attachment seemed quite a matter of course. It became an attachment after the second sitting. The young man resisted it so long. Then he told Carolina that she was the desire of his heart, and that he would never wed any one but herself.

The girl tried to dissuade him from being so much in earnest.

"You will soon forget me, signor, when you return to Naples," she said. But Phil protested that it would not, could not be. The very innocence of her attempt to play the part of Angel of Prudence for him, did but the more increase his infatuation.

Instead of having her to sit for him and his paint-brushes, he took her here and there about the island. He hired a boat on purpose, and kept it in a nook under the headland Capocchia. Carolina gave herself up to the pleasures of the moment, like the true Southerner she was. She even yielded to his urgings that she should call him by his Christian name. "Filipo mio" sounded wondrous sweet on those pretty lips of hers.

At the hotel he made a confidant of Mr.

Brabazon. This gentleman, though he made light of the affair, ventured on the whole to advise Phil not to go too far.

"But," protested the young man, "did you not say it is often done? Who is that rich Englishman that lives by Anacapri with a Capri woman for wife? And there are others in Naples. Why, bless my soul, I think there is no comparison between Carolina and any other girl in the world!"

"Quite so, I don't deny it. But remember what she is. Her parents are not wholly the simple rustics you might fancy. You have given the girl presents—forgive my alluding to them; these are so much property. The old folks know her beauty won't last for ever——"

"Mr. Brabazon!" exclaimed Phil, much shocked.

But the other merely laughed and nodded.

"It is the way of the world—of Capri," he said. "Remember this is the island of the sirens."

"Oh, confound those old legends! I'm resolved."

"So be it, my dear fellow; then all happiness attend you. Possibly it may; I don't know. Life is a queer uncertain business at the best."

That night Master Phil wrote a long letter to Beatrice Falconer, and a short one to Mrs. Falconer. The tone of these letters affected the ladies differently. Mrs. Falconer said "The boy is mad!" when she read hers. But Bee shed tears and said little or nothing.

The more Mrs. Falconer pondered over her letter, the more impatient she became.

"He must be mad," she said at dinner that evening. And, for the poor fellow's own service, though not without inward shuddering, she resolved that the Capri boat of the following day should see her on its deck.

But as it happened, that very evening was a time of bitter humiliation for Phil Daynton. It was an evening of golden sunlight, melting gradually into silver moonlight, with all those surpassing cloud and scenic accompaniments which are part of the fascination of the little island.

Phil dined at the table d'hôte, but hurried away ere half the courses were through. Carolina was waiting for him in the doorway of the shoe-shop in the tiny piazza of the town; and together they sauntered down the lanes between roses and geraniums, to the little boat place.

They had not gone far, however, when, with a shy glance into her lover's eyes, the girl remarked :

"Giovannino is home to-day."

"And who may Giovannino be?" asked Phil, smiling.

"Oh, he is Giovannino. He is very passionate, that is the worst of him. We were brought up together, and——"

"Well?"

"He is my own age, or a little older, not much."

Phil pressed the round arm that hung on his, looked merrily into Carolina's dark eyes, the unusual expression in which did not trouble him, and having laughed again, dismissed Giovannino from his mind.

But when they came to the Capocchia creek, a man in a blue cotton jacket and with a light woollen cap on his head was seen sitting on the gunwale of their boat.

"That," said Carolina, "is Giovannino," and she withdrew her arm from his.

However, Giovannino, since that was his name, had seen them, and was already approaching them rapidly. He began to call out phrases which Phil knew were reproaches and insults, and when he was close to them it seemed as if he would ill-treat the girl.

"Keep your distance," said Phil angrily.

The man lifted his cap sardonically.

"Enough," he said. "I do not allow my 'sposa' to keep company with you any longer, signor."

"Sposa!" cried Phil, and he felt as if he could eat dust from very shame.

"In effect, it is the same thing. We shall be married within the month. She has always been mine—from the first. Make your adieux, signor, I beg; for she and I return together this night, without you."

Phil stood like one petrified. Then he turned upon the girl. There could be no doubt about it. He saw in her face that vague expression of attachment—not towards him—which the Southern woman wears in the presence of her heart's master.

"It is true, Carolina?" he asked dismally.

"Si, signor," she replied.

Mrs. Falconer was horribly ill during the passage the next morning. She looked extremely yellow when Phil was brought to her. But her physical discomfort soon gave up troubling her when she heard the

young man's sorrowful tale to its glad conclusion.

"Will Bee ever forgive me?" he asked.

"You'll have to put the question to her, my dear boy," replied the lady hilariously. "Certainly it was very, very wrong of you to be led away like that. They are a dreadful people, these Italians—the women, I mean. You must take us home next week, Phil, if you please."

"Then you think she will not be hard on me?"

"I'm sure she won't; besides, you really look quite sufficiently punished."

To tell the truth, Bee Falconer showed no rancour at all when Phil unbosomed himself to her. But she could not veil the gladness in her eyes, and her heart's gratitude for this speedy return to her of the lover whom she thought she had lost. As for Phil, he felt that Bee was really dearer to him than she had ever yet been.

THE ACTIVE LIFE.

THERE can be no doubt as to which is the better kind of life for mortals like ourselves—an active or an inactive one. In other planets the conditions of existence may be different, and the ideal life will also be different. But with us, and especially with those of us who live in the temperate zone of the world, the more stir and vigour the better we thrive; the more assured are we that we are acting up to our capacities.

According to George Sand, happiness itself consists in the untrammelled exercise of our faculties. Some would take exception to this definition. It seems to be rather a large order, as the saying is; nor does it take account of the various salutary restraints upon the freedom of the individual which civilisation imposes. But within bounds it is a reasonable statement. Even as a man may be said to dine well who eats heartily of ten courses, or to dine badly if he can afford himself only a morsel of fried fish and a piece of bread; so the man who lives up to his faculties and finds entertainment and employment for every hour of his day is better off than his fellow who develops in but one direction, and fancies he fulfils his destiny by living laboriously in that one direction alone.

Our instincts are all for movement. In childhood our nurses realise this a good deal more than we do. It is a spontaneous

impulse with us. Of course there are exceptions to the rule. But for these exceptions the doctor is called in, and then he does with various invigorating and nasty medicines to bring them to their normal state and emphasize their innate appetite for mischievous or wanton activity. The nursery quarrels and battles royal are all excusable, nay, natural incidents of childish life. Tender-minded aunts may, indeed, think very highly of the disposition of those little mortals who occupy themselves with picture-books, and love rather to be fondled and say sweet things about all with whom they come into touch. But grandmothers and other persons of experience shake their heads at such angelic conduct. There must be, they say, something wrong with the child's constitution. It would be a better augury for its future if it would get into a tearing passion and vex nurse by breaking things right and left, or even discolour its spotless pinafore with the blood of its own little brothers and sisters as a witness to its rampant pugnacity. They foresee the time when this subdued little one and its pretty ways shall no longer brighten the earth. A small green mound and a plaintive inscription shall proclaim to the world that it died because it lacked the usual elements of activity.

Our globe itself, we are told, is an aggregation of living molecules permeated by a force which keeps the molecules perpetually in motion. We are small samples of the planet we inhabit. The blood in our veins compels us to bestir ourselves. "Would you," it seems to say to us, "decompose in life? That is the fate of men and women who yield to a certain depraved torpor which comes to tempt them. They are like stagnant ponds in which divers noisome things breed, and which become unsightly and impure and choked with parasitical vegetation. You are meant to be as a flowing river, crystal clear and refreshing to the eye, good in yourself and a benefit to others. Therefore, obey the mandates I issue with each pulsation of your heart. Be active, and you shall have your reward."

The parallel thus suggested might profitably be pushed somewhat further. There is no denying that even in the present era of human life all our inclinations and desires are not of a convenient kind. Out of question, a life of activity is the best antidote to these perverse appetites in us. The stagnant pond holds all the garbage and

foul things that are cast into it. They rot and fester in it and add to its impurity. It cannot but be so. There is no vent by which they can be driven out of the water they pollute. Not so the river. You may throw a dead dog into it. For a moment or two there is defilement; but the stream does not pause to dissect this unwelcome subject. It takes it and hurries it down its course, and at the first suitable spot sweeps it on to the bank or carries it headlong into the sea. Thus it gets rid of it. Nor is it then a whit the worse for the experience.

So with active and inactive persons. The man whose brain is concentrated on many objects, and whose hand itches to be at work upon them, each in due order, has no time to cherish into vigour the stray thoughts and germs of temptation and evil which drift into him. He does not harbour them. They float about like flower pollen in the air, and disappear without having found any fertilised resting-place. This is well for the man, though it is not so much himself as his aptitudes that are to be thanked for it.

But on the other hand, thousands and tens of thousands of us prove daily that there is no such soil for vice to fatten upon as idleness and inertia.

The inactive man is a more repellant object than the inactive woman, and he drifts into worse sloughs. There is no need to particularise about them.

Some people are so constituted or so train themselves that they resent, as if it were a crime, marked energy in their fellows. To them, Mr. Gladstone is not so much a marvel as a monster! "Why does he make so much fuss?" they ask. "Why does any one excite himself about the affairs of life?"

These are the ultra Conservatives of existence. They have their niche secured, and they grow selfish, or at least inconsiderate of others.

Such persons would arrest the merry motions of the child, confine it to low-ceilinged rooms when it yearns for the open air and the green fields, and do all in their power to retard the movement of the world itself. They would have to-morrow the same as to-day, and to-day they model exactly upon the life they lived yesterday.

Well, as far as they themselves are concerned, one need not dispute with them about their wisdom or folly in the matter. The passive vegetating state does suit some people. They come full-blown, as it were,

into existence, and their minds do not crave for growth like the minds of the majority.

But they ought not to be allowed to fetter the instincts of others who do not resemble them. This is murder of individuality—nothing less. It is also blatant stupidity. What if they have met trouble in the dawn of their lives and been discomfited in the duel! They have no right to assume that because they were defeated, others, dependent on them, are no stronger than they were. There is no such growth as that which proceeds from victory over the troubles which assail the wayfarer in life, popping at him, like skirmishers in a wood, when least he looks for them. And these weak deserters from the active life think they do well to stretch out their perforated pinions and invite the young to shelter beneath them! They are as idiotic as the authorities in Paris of whom Monstrelet tells, in the year 1465. "On Saint John Baptist's Day, in that year, as some youths were bathing in the Seine, they were drowned, which caused a proclamation in all Paris to forbid any one in future to bathe in the river." They are also more than idiotic; they are positively criminal.

It is not so easy as it may seem to distinguish between persons in whom the instinct of activity is strong and those in whom it is weak or stifled. You see people going through the business of life in a phlegmatic way, that appears to stamp them as mere automata. Yet all the while their minds are living with marked intensity. Take Spinoza, for example. Doubtless, as a spectacle-maker, he was not an inspiring sight. But his thoughts were at work far more ardently than his hands. The heaven-intoxicated man was anything rather than an idler.

Louis Stevenson and others of our modern writers who preach the gospel of idleness—or affect to—are not themselves types of inactivity. They do, in fact, but take hold of the interludes of life and exaggerate the profit that may be got from them. Pitching stones into the sea is no such bad pastime for an hour or two; but it is dangerous to recommend the practice indiscriminately. It suits men of vigorous minds for perhaps one day in a hundred; but can you conceive it as good in any way for the athlete who has not half enough calls upon his bodily strength?

I remember crossing the Atlantic with a man who struck me, at first sight, as a very lazy fellow. He was about thirty

years of age, dark of eye and complexion, and, as it seemed, perniciously fond of lounging about with a cigarette between his lips, just staring at the green and white waves. I did not get into conversation with him until the third day of the voyage. Then I immediately reformed my idea of him. He was a distinguished Oxford man, who had not found the mental activity of university life enough for him. He craved development in other directions also. And so he was going off to Manitoba to see what he could do with a Government grant of land. Of course he had capital, though not much. He also had acquaintances whither he was going. But it was a bold step, and only likely to be justified in the case of a man of quite exceptional endowments. As a rule, the mind is jealous of uncommon accomplishment in the body, even as the body seems to resent too much mental cleverness. You can rarely excel in both departments. It seems best for the average man to content himself with a merely creditable uniform development. There will still be plenty of scope for his activity. Neither the prize-fighter nor the old-fashioned University don seem satisfactory specimens of humanity. They are the two poles, between which the average man may be counselled to attempt to steer.

Ours is not an age in which the old-fashioned contemplative person will meet with much sympathy. No doubt there was a certain charm in the infinite quietude of such an existence as Wordsworth's. But the charm would not declare itself until the man had been broken in—perhaps rather painfully—to the career. At first, the primeval yearnings for more stir would be sure to make themselves felt. While tethered, of set purpose, to this or that little rural nook, the mind could hardly fail at times to scamper off hither and thither, and the body would long to accompany the mind. But the discipline once assimilated, much happiness of a passive kind might result.

But imagine Wordsworth face to face with a modern troop of cyclists, ruling the way in that tyrannical mode of theirs! This fairly differentiates our time from his. The cycle is a type of our activity. It is strenuous in the extreme. We have learnt a great deal in the last hundred years, and our appetite has grown with our knowledge. Let those who please restrict themselves to the study of wild flowers and infinitesimal insects. The cycle offers a larger programme—a programme, indeed,

that may be stretched according to the ability of the individual.

It is something of a truism to say that a man succeeds in proportion to the extent of his activities. Our American cousins realise this more fully than we do. We are too apt to believe that a failure in one department of commercial life implies inability to succeed in any department. It is a thousand pities that it is so. The mere prejudice injures us. But in America the case is understood more sanely. It is appreciated there that a man may make his own groove, and the idea that there is any limitation to his activities within the bounds of his strength is scouted as it deserves to be.

Some think that Carlyle, while living the life of a student, was all the while dying to be something much more active. It is extremely likely that there were moments in his life when he would even have enlisted, had a recruiting-sergeant been at hand to take advantage of his mood. But upon the whole we may doubt if he would have done better for himself in any other sphere than that he chose and to which he devoted himself so thoroughly. There was no lack of energy in his career, though objectively it was not apparent. The occasional growls which he vents against the literary life must not be taken too seriously. They merely mark the discontent of the natural man with the station of which he fancies he has long ago exhausted all the pleasures.

As a corrective to Carlyle on this point, Ernest Renan may be mentioned. In his "Recollections" he is almost superlative in praise of the scholar's life. He would not vary his career if he were called upon to live it again. Yet even in him the instinct of energy at the back of all of us leads him to express the hope that he will die a quick, vigorous death—be shot or knocked on the head.

"Life must," we are told, "be active and vigorous, else death is preferable to it."

It is wholesome counsel. The Buddhist who gradually extinguishes his activities is not at all admirable to us. He thinks he thereby attains the kingdom of heaven. To us it appears that he is simply a lunatic.

WIVES FOR SALE.

We frequently hear of articles in French news and literary papers in which the

assertion is gravely and seriously made that the sale of wives in England is of daily occurrence. Some time ago it was stated in a leading journal that "The kingdom of Queen Victoria is the only country in Europe where a man has a right to sell his wife in the name of the law, like a horse or a donkey. It is certain that the possibility of selling his wife with her head in a halter, and of handing her over to the highest bidder, is a proceeding much simpler, and above all more lucrative for the parties interested, than divorce. Happily for the English ladies, the husbands disposed to trot out their wives in the streets at the end of a cord are few in number, but if they wish it there is nothing to prevent them satisfying the whim. It seems strange that in a country where women are asking for the right to vote, they have not yet taken the initiative in a movement to repeal this antiquated law, the last trace of bondage in the laws of a civilised nation."

It is hardly necessary to inform an intelligent Englishman that at no time was it legal for an Englishman to "trot out" his wife at the end of a cord, and sell her to the highest bidder. It is, however, a lamentable fact that a belief still prevails, even in this country, of the legality of this odious and degrading practice; but it is confined to the lower classes in the community, and to foreigners, who do not know the respect in which we Englishmen hold our women folk. Old creeds always die hard, but we may reasonably hope we shall soon have seen and heard the last of wife-selling in England.

In the past the conviction was deeply rooted that a husband might lawfully sell his wife by auction to another, or by auction to the highest bidder, provided he delivered her over with a halter about her neck. If the wife resisted, doubts arose whether the sale could or could not be carried out; but in most cases the wife was quite as ready to depart as her spouse was to get rid of her.

The sales were duly reported in the newspapers and magazines of the period, without any special comment, as items of everyday news. In some instances market tolls were collected, similar to those charged for animals brought to the public market. An examination of old journals, such as the "Gentleman's Magazine," the "Annual Register," and the like, furnishes quite a fund of instances.

Maidens and widows of good repute are

not averse to a little pleasant banter about being leased for life as another name for matrimony. But in bygone times this pleasantry was sometimes elaborated to a remarkable degree. In fact, it was carried to the extent of actually leasing married women for a term of years.

It has been suggested that during the later years of the reign of George the Third, the marital relations among the humbler classes were much disturbed by the exigencies of the Army and Navy. Thousands of English soldiers and sailors died abroad, either in battle or under many of the contingencies arising out of war; while other thousands, though not so many, had become prisoners, or permanent settlers, in foreign countries. Soldiers' and sailors' wives, at the best of times, are in a precarious position, but in those days it was doubtful indeed. Not hearing of their husbands for several years, many of these wives, believing them to be dead, married again. In some cases the husband had not died; he came home, but found it no home for him. Many of the wife sales of the period took place under these circumstances, and the authorities winked at irregularities which obviously arose out of an abnormal state of society.

According to Mr. John Timb the custom of purchasing wives was universal among ancient nations, and obtained to some extent among the higher order of society. Of this an instance may be found in Grimaldi's "*Origines Genealogicæ*" (1828), in which John de Camoys, son and heir of Sir Ralph de Camoys, yielded up to Sir William de Paynel, knight, his wife Margerie, daughter and heiress of Sir John de Gatesden, and makes over to Sir William all her goods and chattels, and consents and grants that she shall abide and remain with him during his pleasure. The lady, however, objected to being thus disposed of, and upon her appealing to the protection of the law, the grant was, in 1302, pronounced by Parliament to be invalid.

Since that time, but mostly from the middle of the eighteenth century, repeated cases of sales of wives have taken place. Some of those which became known and were made public are here arranged in chronological order.

In 1750 a man and his wife falling into discourse with a grazier, at Parham, in Norfolk, the husband offered him his wife in exchange for an ox, provided he would let him choose one out of his drove. The grazier accepted the proposal, and the

wife readily agreed to it. Accordingly they met the next day, when the woman was delivered to the grazier, with a new halter around her neck, and the husband received a bullock which he subsequently sold for six guineas.

The first recorded sale after the accession of George the Third, occurred in the month of March, 1766. In this case a carpenter of Southwark, named Higginson, went into an ale-house for his morning draught; there he met a fellow carpenter, and their conversation turned on wives. The carpenter, whose name history has not recorded, lamented that he had no wife. Higginson, on the other hand, lamented that he had, and expressed regret there was no way except murder by which he could rid himself of her. The carpenter assured Higginson that there was a way—the old English custom had made it quite lawful for a husband to sell his own rib. "No one would be such a fool as to buy mine," sighed Higginson. "I would do so," the other promptly replied, "and think I had made a good bargain too." "Done!" shouted the delighted husband, who clinched the bargain on the spot. Mrs. Higginson was duly claimed by her new lord, and went willingly enough and lived with him as his wife. In a few days, however, Higginson either grew tired of his mateless home or suspected that he had not done right, and went to the other carpenter's house, demanding his wife back. Mrs. Higginson strenuously refused to leave her new lord. "A sale is a sale," said she, "and not a joke." Higginson went again and again, but to no purpose, and after a week or two ceased calling. His wife had just begun to conclude that he had at last quietly resigned his claim, when she was cited to appear before a coroner's jury and identify her husband, who had settled the question by hanging himself. The price paid for the woman is not recorded.

Another sale occurred in the summer of 1767. In this case, however, the man selling the "chattel" had no legal right over it, she being simply a wife by courtesy. Her reputed husband was a bricklayer's labourer, residing at Marylebone, and the price at which she was valued was five shillings and threepence and a gallon of beer. Three weeks after the sale, when the lady was duly housed with her new lord, a wealthy uncle of hers, residing in Devonshire, died, and, quite unexpectedly, acknowledged the kin-

ship by leaving her two hundred pounds and a quantity of plate. The new protector at once decided to sanctify the union by a ceremony of the Church, and so became her husband indeed, and, of course, the possessor of the legacy, there being no Married Women's Property Act in those days.

Edgbaston, Birmingham, was the scene of the next sale of this character which has to be recorded. It took place in the month of August, 1773, and the facts are these. Three men and three women went into the "Bell Inn," Edgbaston Street, Birmingham, and called for the toll-book, which was kept there. In this they made the following extraordinary entry: "August thirty-first, 1773. Samuel Whitehouse, of the parish of Willenhill, in the county of Stafford, this day sold his wife, Mary Whitehouse, in open market, to Thomas Griffiths of Birmingham. Value one shilling. To take her with all faults. (Signed) Samuel Whitehouse, Mary Whitehouse. (Voucher) Thomas Buckley of Birmingham." The parties were said to be well pleased, and the purchase-money and the market-toll demanded for the sale were both cheerfully paid.

The "Ipswich Journal," January twenty-eighth, 1787, states that: "A farmer of the parish of Stowupland sold his wife to a neighbour for five guineas, and, being happy to think he had made a good bargain, presented her with a guinea to buy a new gown. He then went to Stowmarket and gave orders for the bells to be rung on the occasion."

The "London Chronicle" for the first of December, 1787, reported that: "On Monday last a person named Goward led his wife to the market-place at Nuneaton, and there sold and delivered her up, with a halter about her, to one White, for the sum of three guineas. On their way Goward asked his wife if she was not ashamed of being brought to open market to be sold; she said she was not, and was happy to think she was going to have another husband, for she well knew who was going to be her purchaser. When they came to the place Goward embraced his wife and wished her well, upon which she returned the compliment. White declared himself extremely well satisfied, and paid down the money, assuring the quondam husband it was good and full weight. The purchase being completed, White gave the ringers a handsome treat to ring a peal, and they spent the re-

mainder of the day with the greatest joy imaginable."

A case which occurred in 1790 is slightly different to the foregoing, for it is the record of a girl who actually bought her husband. She was an Oxfordshire lass and was on the eve of marriage to a young man of the same county, when the bridegroom elect would not consent to name the day unless her friends would advance fifty pounds for her dowry. Her friends being too poor to comply with this demand, the lass, who evidently thought a mercenary husband better than no husband at all, went to London and sold her hair, which was delicately long and light, to a chapman in the Strand, for three pounds per ounce. As it weighed just twenty ounces, she returned with joy to Oxfordshire with sufficient money to buy her exacting husband, and ten pounds to boot.

The next case is copied from "The Times" of March thirtieth, 1796: "On Saturday evening last, John Lees, steel burner, sold his wife for the small sum of sixpence to Samuel Hall, fellmonger, both of Sheffield. Lees gave Hall one guinea immediately to have her taken off to Manchester the day following by the coach. She was delivered up with a halter round her neck, and the clerk of the market received fourpence for toll."

In "The Times" for the eighteenth of July, 1797, mention was made that a butcher had "exposed his wife for sale in Smithfield Market, near the 'Ram Inn,' with a halter round her neck and one about her waist, which tied her to a railing. A hog drover, who was the happy purchaser, paying the husband three guineas and a crown for his departed rib." A few days later, commenting on this sale, "The Times" said, "by some mistake in our report of the Smithfield Market we had not learned the average price of wives for the last week. The increasing value of the fair sex is esteemed by several eminent writers as a certain criterion of increasing civilisation. Smithfield has, on this ground, strong pretensions to refined improvement, as the price of wives has risen in that market from half a guinea to three guineas and a half."

Again, on the nineteenth of September, 1797, the same journal announced that "An hostler's wife in the country recently fetched twenty-five guineas. We hear there is to be a sale of wives soon at Christies'. We have no doubt they will soon go off

well." Fancy the mighty thunderer condescending to a joke in these days!

On the second of December, 1797, "The Times" further announced that "at the last sale of wives there was but a poor show, though there were plenty of bidders. One alone went off well, being bought by a Taylor who outbid eight of his competitors."

At Chapel-en-le-Frith, in 1802, a man disposed of his wife, child, and part of his household furniture—"as much as would set up a beggar," says the "Morning Herald"—"for the sum of eleven shillings; and in the same year a Hereford butcher put his wife up for sale by public auction. The highest bid, which was accepted, was twenty-four shillings and a bowl of punch, consumed by the whole of the contracting parties.

The "Doncaster Gazette," on March the twenty-fifth, 1803, informed its readers that "a fellow sold his wife as a cow in Sheffield market-place a few days ago. The lady was put into the hands of a butcher, who held her by a halter fastened round the waist. 'What do you ask for your cow?' said a bystander. 'A guinea,' replied the butcher. 'Done,' cried the other, and immediately led away his bargain. We understand that the purchaser and his 'cow' live very happily together."

On the eighth of July, 1805, a fellow at Taxford took his wife into the market-place with a halter round her neck and a child in her arms, and sold her and the infant for a crown. The journal which records the transaction considers "it is to be regretted that no one present had the courage to take the rope from the wife's neck and lay it on the husband's back." The probability is, however, that the persons who witnessed this vile transaction were either struck dumb with marvel, and could only think it a joke, or else knew the man to be such a brute that they fancied the most unrighteous change was better for the woman and the child than their continuance as they were. The quiet consent of the wife was a witness not only of her discomfort with her husband, but also of the degraded view of wifedom held by this class of salesmen and sold persons.

According to the "Annual Register," a man named John Gawthorpe—or Gas-thorpe—exposed his wife for sale in the market at Hull, about one o'clock, on the fourteenth of February, 1806, but owing to the crowd which such an extraordinary

occurrence had brought, he was obliged to defer the sale and take her away about four o'clock. However, he again brought her out, and she was sold for twenty guineas, being delivered, with a halter, to a man named Houseman, who had lodged with them for five years.

The year 1807 witnessed three of these degraded transactions, the first of which was at Knaresborough, where a man disposed of his wife for sixpence and "a quid of tobacco." About the same week a man disposed of his wife in Sheffield Market. "What is your price?" asked an onlooker. "A pound," replied the husband. "Agreed," said the other, as he paid the money, and marched off his newly acquired chattel. In the third case the sale was not completed, as the person most nearly concerned refused to be a party to the transaction. A Mr. John Lupton, of Linton, offered to purchase the wife of Mr. Richard Waddilove, innkeeper, of Grassington, and was content to go as high as one hundred guineas to please his fancy. Waddilove consented without hesitation, and received a guinea as earnest money. The next morning the eager purchaser hurried off to Grassington, taking with him the ninety-nine guineas, and demanded the fulfilment of the bargain. Mr. Waddilove was quite ready. He would willingly have packed the goods and got her off, but Mrs. Waddilove had some womanly dignity and sense of right. Even if she might, she said, she did not choose to be parted with as a mere chattel, and she sent off her would-be purchaser with scorn and threats. The crafty Waddilove, it is stated, kept the earnest money.

A Cumberland couple who, in 1810, were not on the best of terms agreed between them that the weaker vessel should be sold. In this case the woman evidently possessed some of the serpent's cunning, however much of the dove's gentleness may have fallen to her share. Finding the market for this sort of chattel was dull near home, she persuaded her husband to carry her to Newcastle, where, by a ruse which everybody must appreciate, he was seized by the press-gang and carried off to sea, while she returned home and carried on the farm.

The next recorded sale of a wife occurred in 1817, on the Island of St. Helena, while Napoleon was a prisoner there. The extract in which it occurs is taken from "Napoleon in Exile," by his surgeon, Barry O'Meara. "Napoleon then made some remark about

Mr. P——e's having sold his wife, which he said would reflect but little credit on the Governor—Sir Hudson Lowe—and that, had such a circumstance occurred in France, the Procurer-General would have prosecuted the offending parties; that it appeared to be a most disgraceful circumstance, especially when, as it appeared to be, it had been sanctioned by the two organs of communication of the Governor—civil and military." In a footnote, Mr. O'Meara adds: "This circumstance actually happened at St. Helena."

Three years elapse, and in 1820 we read of a man named Brouchet leading his wife, a decent-looking woman, into the cattle-market at Canterbury, from the neighbouring village of Broughton. He asked a salesman to put up his wife for him, whereupon that individual replied that as his dealings were with cattle, and not with women, he must decline the commission. The husband thereupon hired a pen, or stall, for which he paid the usual tollage of sixpence, and led his wife into it by a halter. Soon afterwards he disposed of his "stock" to a Canterbury man for the sum of five shillings.

Early in the month of December, 1822, notice was given to the inhabitants of Plymouth that at 12.30 on a certain morning a man named Brooks intended to dispose of his wife by public sale. The lady, it was declared, was not only young and handsome, but would ride to the place of sale of her own free will, on her own horse, and further, that in a few days she would succeed to the sum of six hundred pounds. There was, as might be expected, a large concourse of people to witness this marvel. Presently, at the advertised hour, the husband rode up; and soon after the wife, accompanied by an ostler, also appeared. The husband, as auctioneer, put up the wife for sale, and requested the bidders to commence. Five shillings was the first offer, and by bids of the same amount the price rose to three pounds, at which sum it stood to the ostler. At this juncture, however, the police appeared upon the scene and seized both salesman and chattel, to the evident disappointment of both, conveying them to the Guildhall, where they were questioned by the Mayor. The husband, in answer to the chief magistrate, stated that he and his wife believed it was quite legal. He understood there was a man willing to pay three pounds down and seventeen pounds at Christmas, and as his wife was anxious to belong to the man, they had

agreed a sale should take place. The wife stated that the person who had promised to become her purchaser had not put in an appearance, and she had employed the ostler to purchase her with her own money unless she went for more than twenty pounds. The illegality of the act was explained to the couple, and they were then bound over in their own recognisances to answer the charge at the next sessions.

The "Whitehaven Herald and Cumberland Advertiser" for May first, 1832, gave an account of a singular wife sale, which took place on the seventh of April, 1832. One Joseph Thompson, a farmer, had been three years married, but had not found his happiness advanced, as he had a right to expect. Believing that a sale by auction would legally dissolve the marriage and remove its obligations, he came into Carlisle with his wife, and by means of a bellman intimated he was about to dispose of the chattel. At midday the sale commenced in the presence of a large number of persons. Thompson placed his wife on a large oak chair with a rope or halter of straw about her neck. He then harangued those present in these terms:

"Gentlemen, I have to offer to your notice my wife, Mary Ann Thompson, otherwise Williams, whom I mean to sell to the highest and fairest bidder. Gentlemen, it is her wish as well as mine to part for ever. She has been to me only a born serpent. I took her for my comfort and the good of my home, but she became my tormentor, a domestic curse, a night invasion, and a dally devil. Gentlemen, I speak truth from my heart when I say God deliver us from troublesome wives and frolicsome women! Avoid them as you would a mad dog, a roaring lion, a loaded pistol, cholera morbus, Mount Etna, or any other pestilential thing in Nature. Now I have shown you the dark side of my wife, and told you her faults and failings, I will introduce the bright and sunny side of her and explain her qualifications and goodness. She can read novels and milk cows; she can laugh and weep with the same ease that you could take a glass of ale when thirsty. Indeed, gentlemen, she reminds me of what the poets say of women in general:

Heaven gave to women the peculiar grace
To laugh, to weep, to cheat the human race.

She can make butter, and scold the maids; she can sing Moore's Melodies, and plait her frills and caps; she cannot make rum, gin, or whisky, but she is a good

judge of the quality from long experience in tasting them. I therefore offer her with all her perfections and imperfections for the sum of forty shillings."

The sale occupied between an hour and a half and two hours, when ultimately she was knocked down to Henry Mears for twenty shillings and a Newfoundland dog. The newly coupled pair left the city together, the crowd huzzaing and cheering after them. Mr. Thompson coolly took the straw halter from off his old wife and put it on his new dog. He then betook himself to the nearest inn and spent the rest of the day there. No doubt before the setting of the sun the whole of the purchase-money of his wife had gone down his throat in drink. He repeatedly exulted in his happy release from bondage.

The "Birmingham Argus," for March, 1834, contained the intimation that a man had led his wife into the Birmingham Cattle Market by a halter and succeeded in disposing of her; but the amount of purchase-money is not mentioned.

In 1835 a woman was publicly sold in the north of England by her husband for the handsome sum of fifteen pounds. She willingly went home with the purchaser, and outlived both purchaser and seller. Subsequently, she became for the second time a legal wife. After the death of her first husband, by whom she was sold, she claimed certain property of which he had died possessed. The relatives of the husband contested the claim, urging the sale had been a valid one, and that the man had died wifeless. Much to their astonishment and chagrin, the law decided otherwise.

In 1837 a man was convicted at the Yorkshire Assizes for having attempted to sell his wife by auction, and was committed to prison for two months with hard labour. His neighbours, it is said, considered him badly treated.

On the thirty-first of January, 1853, a young man named W. C. Capas was charged at the Public Office, Birmingham, with having assaulted his wife. The evidence disclosed the fact that the husband was "leased to another female," and the following extraordinary document was produced in Court and read: "Memorandum of agreement made and entered into this second day of October, in the year of our Lord 1852, between William Charles Capas, of Charles Henry Street, in the Borough of Birmingham, in the County of

Warwick, carpenter, of the one part, and Emily Hickson, of Hurst Street, Birmingham, aforesaid, spinster, of the other part. Whereas, the said William Charles Capas and Emily Hickson have mutually agreed with each other to live and reside together, and to mutually assist in supporting and maintaining each other during the remainder of their lives, and also to sign the agreement hereinafter contained to that effect. Now, therefore, it is hereby mutually agreed upon by and between the said William Charles Capas and Emily Hickson, that they the said, etc., shall live and reside together during the remainder of their lives, and that they shall mutually exert themselves by work and labour, and by following all their business pursuits to the best of their abilities, skill, and understanding, and by advising and assisting each other for their mutual benefit and advantage, and also to provide for themselves and each other the best supports and comforts of life which their means and incomes may afford. And for the true and faithful performance of this agreement each of the said parties bindeth himself and herself unto the other finally by this agreement, as witness the hands of the said parties this day and year first above written." The signatures follow. The female admitted signing the document, and said she believed a lawyer was paid one pound fifteen shillings for drawing it up. Capas was fined two shillings and sixpence, and the Bench commented in strong terms on the document which had that day been brought before them.

The cheapest wife of which there is any record up to this time was purchased at Dudley in 1859, the price paid being sixpence. The husband believed his wife could have no further claim upon him.

According to a Welsh newspaper, a man employed at the Cyfarthfa ironworks sold his wife, in 1863, to a fellow-workman for the sum of two pounds ten shillings, with the understanding that another half-sovereign should be spent in drink. The wife, it is said, was more amused than indignant at the transaction.

On the fifth of July, 1872, a well-dressed woman applied to the Exeter magistrates for a summons against her husband, who had refused to support her children. To the utter astonishment of the justices she stated that her husband had sold her to a man with whom she was then living for fifty pounds, he undertaking to support two of the children.

He appeared, however, to have gone back on his bargain, and refused to do anything for them, and the magistrates very wisely declined to interfere.

In 1877 a wife was sold for forty pounds, and what is more remarkable, the articles of sale were drawn up and signed at a solicitor's office, the money paid, and the chattel handed over with all the gravity of law.

In the course of a County Court case at Sheffield in May, 1881, a man named Moore stated that he was living with the wife of one of his friends, and that he had purchased her for a quart of beer! This transaction was brought under the notice of the Government by Mr. A. M. Sullivan, who requested the Home Secretary to take measures for preventing such reprehensible transactions. This had no effect, evidently, for since that time many sales have been recorded.

During the hearing of a School Board case in the course of 1881, at Ripon, a woman informed the Bench that she had been bought for twenty-five shillings, and had assumed the name of the purchaser.

At Alfreton, in 1882, a husband sold his rib for a glass of beer in a public-house, and the rib gladly deserted her legal lord. Once cannot expect a wife for less than twopence halfpenny!

Two years after this a bricklayer at Peasholme Green, Yorkshire, sold his wife for one shilling and sixpence, a "legal" document being drawn up to make the bargain binding on all sides.

In "The Globe" of May the sixth, 1887, there appeared an account of a well-to-do weaver at Burnley, who was charged with having deserted his wife and three children. He admitted the soft impeachment at once, but urged that inasmuch as he had sold the whole family to another man before the alleged desertion, he was acquitted of all responsibility for their maintenance. It was nothing to him whether their purchaser provided for their wants, the law had better see to that. For himself he had duly received three-halfpence, the amount of the purchase money; and there his interest in the affair began and ended!

During 1889 a paragraph went the round of the papers, to the effect that a man connected with a religious body in a village in the midland counties had disposed of his wife for the small sum of one shilling. A friend of his had evinced an

affection for the woman, and the husband expressed his willingness to part with her for a slight consideration. The sum of one shilling was offered and accepted, and the husband subsequently put a halter round his wife's neck and led her to the house of the purchaser. The affair caused no little stir and amusement in the district, and the religious body soon got rid of their too broad-minded member.

In the present year a case was actually heard in a London police court where a wife had been sold and purchased.

No wonder, in the face of such instances as these, foreigners think us a nation of wife sellers, particularly when they read the startling announcements that the conditions of sale were drawn up by solicitors. Whether the old, wicked, and erroneous belief that such sales are legal will ever die remains to be seen. In spite of the many contradictions that have been made, the legality of the transaction is still believed in by some.

Before leaving the subject it may be worth while pointing out that while wife sales have, comparatively speaking, been common, husband sales have not been unknown. Such a case occurred at Sheffield in 1888. The husband being out of work went to Australia, and on the way out made the acquaintance of a young woman, who appears to have formed a strong attachment for him. Finding that he was already in the bonds of matrimony, she suggested, it is said, that possibly the wife left at home would sell him to her, and he, jokingly, advised her to write and ask. She did so, and the wife asked one hundred pounds for all rights; but eventually accepted twenty pounds, which sum was paid, and the purchaser and purchased were married in Australia.

About the same time the Wolverhampton magistrates heard a case in which a man was summoned to show cause why he should not support a child. The evidence offered showed the man's wife had sold him to the mother of the child for five pounds, but when the money was exhausted, finding she could get no more, she demanded her husband. The result was the action which disclosed the sale.

The whole of the foregoing cases are duly authenticated. Many others have been reported, but being minus names and locality are of doubtful character, and have been left out of consideration.

THE LATE MRS. VERNON.

By A. MOBERLY.

Author of "*Lady Valeria*," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XVI.

It was like old times again to come down to breakfast and find Major Tarrant standing on the hearthrug, newspaper in one hand, watch in the other, timing the arrival of the breakfast in his old familiar way.

"Good morning, Miss Margison," pocketing the watch and holding out his hand, exactly as he had done on an average three hundred days out of every year of the seven I had spent with him. This time, however, he added, "How are you?" Then he pulled himself up with a jerk and stared at me.

I felt quite conscious and uncomfortable, it was such a new experience to be looked at at all by him. He used to be aware of my presence as one is aware of the position and general appearance of some article of furniture in the room—something useful but not decorative.

However, I took up my place behind the coffee-pot, called his attention to one of Mrs. Brent's special breakfast dishes, and reminded myself of the exact quantity of sugar and milk that he insisted on, and tried not to be aware that he continued to stare at intervals, and once remarked "By Jove!" to himself under his scrubby moustache.

"You—you are looking uncommonly well this morning," he said awkwardly at last. "None the worse for——"

"Not at all, thank you," I interrupted hastily, in dread of what might follow. At present the opiate and the long night's rest fell like a heavy black curtain between to-day and yesterday, and I dreaded to lift it. An explanation must come, but I would put it off as long as I could. "Where are Mrs. Tarrant and the children, and why are you not all at the Marquesas?"

"Fell through," he replied in snatches between the mouthfuls. "Sir Algy, my cousin, got married at the last moment; girl's father a big swell; thought the place not good enough for her; lots of influence; found a better berth at home for Algy; didn't want me. Bride didn't care to have my ugly mug about; didn't hit it off with Laura, either; awful sell for Laura."

Major Tarrant seemed grimly diverted by the recollection.

"But that was treating you very shabbily."

"Not a bit; hated the notion of going out. Algy's a decent fellow, too; spoke to the Duke about me. I'm going to be an inspector of something—don't know what yet. That's what brought me up to town."

After this unusual conversational effort he went on with his breakfast in silence.

I settled myself after breakfast with a basketful of Kitty's sewing, with which I had promised to help her; but as I worked I felt his gaze upon me over the edge of the paper, till at last he dropped the pretence of reading.

"Mrs. Vernon was a regular celebrated society beauty, wasn't she?" he began. "And you're so like her that they cannot tell the difference. By Jove!"

His tone spoke unutterable amazement.

"I am like what Mrs. Vernon might have been if she had grown old, and injured, and shattered; not like Mrs. Vernon the beauty."

"I don't know that. Fortescue says you are better-looking than he ever remembers her."

I shrank back into my sewing.

"Do you know Colonel Fortescue?" I asked presently in a very small voice.

"Why, certainly; or how should I have found you yesterday? This is how it happened. I got a letter about two months ago that I could not make head or tail of, from a Colonel Fortescue. A lady who had lived with us as governess had referred him to me. Now I knew, or thought I knew, that you were lying snug under the daisies, and didn't know what to say. Laura suggested that you might have been trying for another situation before leaving us; but the man didn't write as if he wanted a governess himself. I didn't know what it all might mean, and made up my mind not to answer till I got up to town and could see him. So I wrote and said I hoped to call soon. His letter had been following me about for so long that it didn't matter. Then all sorts of worries began. My mother fell ill; she said the children were too much for her without a governess. Couldn't get one to suit Laura. Tried a dozen at least; wished for you back every hour of the day. Then Laura got uncommonly sick of looking after them and

said she'd go on a visit to the Croftons. They are great people now—big house in the country. You remember them?"

I did, very distinctly. Many a night had I toiled into the small hours attempting to reproduce Mrs. Crofton's triumphs of millinery; many a time had I to console Mrs. Tarrant with the assurance that Mrs. Crofton's waist measured at least three inches more than hers, and that everybody must notice that her gloves and boots were several sizes larger than Mrs. Tarrant's. Mrs. Tarrant professed an extravagant fondness for the heavy, rather vulgar little woman, and had her reward in the use of the Croftons' carriage and horses, costly gifts of dress and trinkets, and payment of her share in all entertainments in which the Croftons were included.

"You know Laura's dodge. Writes to say she's coming, without giving time for a letter to stop her. She's tried it once too often. Got to King's Croft and found all the family just recovering from mumps. Caught it herself, and as every one else is well, Mrs. Crofton has made herself rather nasty about having to nurse her. Haw, haw! That's why I've come up to town alone. But I was telling you about Fortescue, wasn't I? Of course I went to look him up—got his address from his club and called on Sunday. You never saw a man more startled than he was when I walked in. He had just been reading your letter and was in a great taking about it. So we talked a bit, and finally decided on coming round here to see you. Landlady in hysterics. Mrs. Vernon had gone out, solemnly promising to come back in half an hour, and had been gone all day. I suggested waiting till you did come in, but Fortescue was nearly as bad as the landlady; wanted to send for every detective in London, and was off to the nearest police station when the landlady's small boy ran after him. He knew where you were, had taken a drive on the back of your cab on his way to do some errand, so he brought us to the door where he had seen you go in, and Fortescue gave him a sovereign and sent him for a policeman. Now, perhaps, you'd better explain what you were doing there."

I told him the whole horrible story. It sounded worse, much worse in my ears than I had fancied it. Major Tarrant worked himself up to a pitch of indignation that amazed me. He got up and stamped about, venting his wrath in angry

growls. "The scoundrel! If I'd only known it—lucky for him I didn't! I've given him something to remember me by as it is. He may summon me if he chooses."

"Was Colonel Fortescue there?" I ventured to ask at last.

"Rather. It was he burst the door in while the policeman was making up his mind. We made a rush for the room, and there you were just quietly slipping down on the floor with that brute at your throat and Vernon making believe to pull him off. He was an ugly customer to meddle with—that dog. Fortescue stunned him with the policeman's truncheon and dragged him off, while Vernon danced and stormed, 'Confound you, don't kill him; he wasn't doing her any harm!' till I sent him flying into a corner after the dog. Then Fortescue went to pick you up, which it hadn't occurred to me to do for the moment. The brute was on us again before I'd time to look round, and grabbed at you but caught Fortescue's arm instead. He was a grand dog, that; rather have cut Vernon's throat than his."

Major Tarrant sighed.

"Is Baal dead?"

He passed his hand significantly across his throat. "Gone where the good dogs go. Found a knife lying handy beside you. Fortescue thought he'd better go before you came to—the mess he was in might scare you. Took Vernon away. Wonder what he'll do with him?"

I was unable to inform him.

"Perhaps he'll tell me if I see him at the club. Hullo! how the morning's going! Must be off. Ever so much to do. Meant to have left town by the early train to-day."

"And you stayed to take care of me?" I asked gratefully.

"Fortescue made me promise. Got nervous. Didn't like your being left here alone at all. Says you made him promise to get your letter from his chambers before he went back to the country on Saturday. When he got there and found no letter he fancied there was some mischief afloat, so after seeing Miss Vernon off he came back again, and hung about the place all Saturday night. That's how your letter reached him on Sunday, and saved me an hour of explanation. It was a piece of luck for you, too, wasn't it?" I assented with a shudder. If those two men had not met! "And now, what do you suppose is going to become of you?"

"I am going to work again as fast as I can. I shall set about finding some to-day."

I spoke without enthusiasm. He contemplated me, whistling thoughtfully.

"You don't look much like it."

"Are you looking at my finery? You don't know how glad I shall be to get back to the old dresses and the old ways once more——"

I stopped short; the falsehood stung my lips; and yet—I had thought it was the truth when I spoke it.

"Not you! Good heavens, how you must have hated it all!—Algy's sums, and Laura's frocks, and all the rest of the grind in that beastly old school-room. Like to come back! Oh, I say!"

I did hate the prospect from the depths of my heart; but I wasn't going to admit it.

"Try me. Will Mrs. Tarrant take me back?"

"Won't she just! You should hear her lamenting for the good old times when the children were always good and tidy, and her silk stockings weren't all holes at the heels."

I gave my chair a twist round that he should not see my face, and answered him resolutely:

"I'll come. I'll do my best to please her. It's all I am fit for now."

"Then I'll go and telegraph to Laura. She doesn't know that you're alive yet. You're quite in earnest?"

"Quite," bending low over my sewing.

He put his paper down and walked towards the door. He stopped on the threshold.

"You can't be ready in time. I go by the 5.40. Can't wait till the next train."

"I shall be ready."

"All right."

The door closed on him, and I ventured to lift my head. Such a woebegone, white face looked down upon me from the mirror over the chimney-piece that I felt startled and ashamed, and gave the chair a further twist round to bring myself out of the range of reflection. Major Tarrant's boots creaked back along the passage. He poked his head in.

"Don't you decide in a hurry; think it over. I'll wait till the nine train." I shook my head. "Better wait a day or two. You know—haw! haw!—you might meet with a better engagement."

"I don't want time for consideration," I answered over my shoulder.

"Then that's settled?"

"Yes, that's settled." I repeated like a dismal little echo, snipping off the length of blue embroidery that I had just finished as if to emphasize the note of finality. He still lingered.

"I shan't complain if you have changed your mind when I come back, you know."

Then he really departed—or I thought so. I might fold my hands in my lap and gaze moodily into the fire unobserved. I might cry if I chose; but I refused to do one or the other. Why should I? I was going to find shelter, protection, honourable occupation. I was going to the life that had best suited me. I was going—— Oh, why go over and over it all again? I was going; that was enough. I stitched away till I had finished a second length of embroidery, then folded and put away my work, and winked away the tears which so unaccountably filled my eyes.

The door opened once more. I dare not turn my face nor yet wipe the tears from it, but sat bolt upright addressing the figure that I dimly saw behind me in the looking-glass.

"I haven't changed my mind yet. I have thought it over. I'm ready to come with you as soon as you like."

Then the tears dried in my eyes and my cheeks started into flame as I sprang up and faced, not Major Tarrant but Colonel Fortescue.

His face was alight with laughing surprise. How much brighter, younger, happier he looked than I had thought! His right arm was in a sling, and my eyes filled again as I stammered my explanations. He held out his left hand in greeting.

"We have just parted from Tarrant—at least I have. He asked Muriel to take him into the Park while I paid my visit here. You know that Muriel and I were to see the lawyer to-day, and I thought you might care to hear how we got on." He was talking to give me confidence, I felt, studying my face all the time and still keeping hold of my hand. "I have told Muriel everything—that she need know," he said gently. "I thought you would wish it."

I looked up gratefully, met his eyes with the old kindly light in them, and whispered some half-choked thanks. I ventured to lay my fingers lightly on the black sling.

"I heard how this was done."

"It's nothing to look so sad about," he

answered cheerily. "The wrist is bruised and stiff, so I must not use my hand much." He held in his injured fingers the letter I had sent him. "I could not answer this in writing, you see, so I had to come myself."

"You believe I told the truth in it, don't you? I know you must blame me; but I meant no harm. Won't you forgive me before I go away?"

"Blame you? Forgive you? My dear, my dear, if you only knew how happy this has made me!"

I looked up again in blank wonderment.

"Do you not understand that we all were insisting on your being Tom Vernon's wife, while all the time I was wanting you for mine?"

"Oh you dear, dear misguided darling!" cried Muriel, running in and throwing her arms round my neck. "Why couldn't you have kept it up a wee bit longer? I'd rather have you as an impostor than the most genuine mamma they could provide for me. But perhaps you wouldn't like me for a daughter, and I know you'd never stand Mr. Vernon for a husband!"

"Congratulate you, Miss Margison. Wish you every happiness." Major Tarrant was not exactly fluent in a tête-à-tête, and generally speechless with a stranger present; but Colonel Fortescue had exchanged a few words with him while Muriel was delivering her address to me, and he stepped forward resolved on doing his duty. He gave us one stiff handshake apiece, and then broke down. "Shan't expect you to be ready for the 5.40 to-day, Miss Margison. Haw, haw! just as I said. A better engagement has offered itself. Haw, haw!"

CHAPTER XVII.

THERE I thought my story might have fittingly closed. The deception in which I had been innocently involved had come to an end, and Elizabeth Margison was restored to the number of the living. But I am reminded that there is something yet to tell of others besides my own egotistic self, and that the real conclusion of the story cannot come till Elizabeth Margison, as well as Mrs. Vernon, disappears for ever.

We had a long and animated discussion that night—by "we," I mean Miles, who, finding me rather oppressed by the magnitude of the disclosures to be made to

Dr. Millar and Kitty on their return, volunteered to stay and help me through with them; Muriel, who stayed because Miles stayed, with a second interview with the lawyers as her excuse to the Lady Principal; and Major Tarrant, who missed the 5.40 and never enquired the hour of the next train. Kitty's reception of the news passes my powers of description. How she exclaimed and embraced me and danced with delight, and wanted her James to call a cab there and then, and drive forthwith to the hospital to crow over "Old Walsham."

Dr. Millar pacified her by promising to write first thing next morning. Meanwhile Miles had already sent the notice of Mrs. Vernon's death to the leading London and country papers, and Dr. Millar furthermore promised to go down to his uncle's—the Vicar of Lower Shelton, the scene of the accident—bearing the necessary authorisation to erase the false inscription on the tombstone in the churchyard.

"But I never can call her 'Miss Margison,' all the same," protested Kitty. "It's so dreadfully puzzling. Oh, do get married soon, Colonel Fortescue, and settle it some way. Don't you all think I ought to be bridesmaid?"

This very irrelevant and frivolous interruption to the serious question of the evening scandalised me—but nobody else.

"So you shall," cried Muriel, "and I'll be the other. And, oh, darling, do let it be before my holidays—they begin next month."

"We can only spare three weeks longer," said Dr. Millar.

"Bertie sails in a fortnight, and he must be Miles's best man," Muriel declared.

"As there is no one to represent Miss Margison's own family available," said Major Tarrant, "I hope I may have the honour of giving her away on that occasion. I have another week's leave."

A week! Even Kitty looked startled, and I looked for Miles to protest, but he did no such thing. "My dear, when I think of your present unprotected and anomalous position, I feel that I ought not to leave you a day in it," and I saw there was no support to be expected from him.

They had their way. A special license was obtained, and more work was despatched in that week than anybody but Kitty could have conceived possible. Casting all care for her own beloved trousseau to the winds, she flung herself heart and soul into my modest preparations, running

from shop to shop, dressmakers, milliners, florists, interviewing, ordering, supervising and suggesting with perfectly marvellous results.

I expected a quiet wedding, but found to my amazement that Major Tarrant—of all men—wanted to “see the thing done properly,” and insisted on giving me, as his present, a wedding-dress, the ordering of which was left to Kitty’s discretion. Kitty and Muriel, too, had devised between them bridesmaids’ dresses glorious to behold, and I had not the heart to make objections. Then Muriel begged that her dear old “Lady Prince” might be invited, and then one, two, and three most particular friends at school, and there were brother officers of Bertie’s, and, oddest of all, two girl cousins of Dr. Millar’s from the country—the very ones who, in their charity, had laid their flowers on the coffin of the unknown woman lying under the shadow of their father’s church. As to Miles, he is a man of many friends, young and old, and congratulations and presents rained in till I felt fairly overwhelmed, though I was far from guessing who some of the guests at my wonderful wedding might prove to be.

The day began with a letter from Dr. Walsham. It was learned and lengthy. I made out that he admitted something, and regretted something; but all was so qualified and explained away that I merely gleaned a faint notion that he had been right on the whole from beginning to end, though some of the results were not what might have been expected.

Then Kitty in due time put me into my gown. It was a stately and sumptuous garment—heavy brocade and sheeny satin—what would Mrs. Tarrant have said!—veiled with costly lace from amongst Miss Honor Vernon’s treasures, the gift of Muriel. Then she devoted herself to her own toilette, and turned herself into the most perfect little Dresden china figure of white and gold, with great plumy hat, yellow hair, pink cheeks, and posy of pink azaleas.

The wintry sunshine cleared the streets of mist before us as we drove to the church, but enough remained in my eyes to blind me to everything around me, and I was conscious of nothing beyond the sound of Miles’s voice and the touch of his dear hand till the service was over. It was not till we reached home again, where my own familiar room had been transformed by Kitty, the florist, and the con-

fectioner into something entirely festal and unfamiliar, that I began to recognise the guests who followed to offer their congratulations. Muriel’s “Lady Prince” in violet velvet and gold nippers, the two pretty girls in heliotrope, and the dark one in chestnut-brown, who carefully put the length and breadth of the room between themselves and the good lady before they began to laugh and chatter with Miles’s young subaltern friends, were as certainly the schoolgirls. Then there was Bertie in his blue uniform. But who were the gentle old lady and the sturdy, square, bronzed old man? “Admiral and Mrs. Gordon,” whispered Miles hurriedly, as they came up to bestow their good wishes on us. I was pleased to see what a very unimportant object I was in their eyes, which were all four following my Muriel with keenest interest. She looked like a princess in a fairy tale in her white and gold, with her great dark eyes and pretty stately carriage.

The room had filled. I had cut the great white cake with Miles’s satin be-ribboned sword, when Major Tarrant, glass in hand, stimulated by Kitty, rose and electrified the company by breaking into a speech. It was twelve words long, and exactly like a telegram. The applause and laughter which followed it were at their height when once more the door swung wide, and an announcement fell into the midst of us:

“Sir Claude Levison.”

If he had been the bad fairy of a nursery tale dropping from the sky on a broomstick into our midst, he could hardly have created more consternation amongst the little group around me. Kitty jumped, and dropped the salver of cake she was handing round, creating a welcome diversion. Miles made a stride forward, as if to forbid him to approach me, and Muriel—the witch—looking at least three times more frightened than she could possibly feel, fairly ran straight into Admiral Gordon’s arms for protection—and stayed there.

In he came, big, impressive, magnificent, the fur-trimmed coat thrown widely back from his expansive chest, disclosing the gardenia in his buttonhole, the delicately blushing satin of his scarf and its pearl pin, his liquid dark eyes beaming, his lips wreathed with honeyed smiles—a wedding guest every inch of him.

I don’t know what Miles said to him; only the reply, in his low, melodious voice, reached me:

"Most undoubtedly. It would be an arrant intrusion for me to present myself here in the character of a guest or a friend of you or your bride's. But no one, least of all you, Colonel Fortescue, would deny to his bitterest enemy one poor privilege—that of confessing himself in the wrong, and desiring to make reparation."

Miles bowed gravely. I think I would have much preferred a declaration of open hostility on the spot to what he might say by way of explanation with Muriel within hearing. I need not say how carefully the episode of my visit to Mrs. Vernon's house had been kept secret amongst us. He was human enough to enjoy my disquietude for an instant; in the next I saw that I had nothing to fear.

"I have been the victim of a gross misapprehension, as have others"—with a side glance at Miles—"which has led to my interfering unwarrantably in Mrs. Fortescue's affairs. I am on the point of leaving England for some time, and felt that I could not go without having received Mrs. Fortescue's forgiveness. This day of all others I ought to be able to count on some grace being shown me, especially if Colonel Fortescue intercedes for me."

"I have nothing to forgive you, Sir Claude. You may dismiss from your mind at once any idea that I regard you as an enemy."

I think he had hoped for some warmer expression, but he smiled serenely and drew nearer to me.

"I can offer you one satisfaction, Mrs. Fortescue," he said, in a low tone. "Vernon shall not oppose any of your arrangements for his daughter's welfare; so much I can promise. He is going abroad with me to enquire into his late wife's affairs. I think it possible that he may establish his claim to the property she has left, in which case he is not likely to return to trouble you for many a day to come. As for me"—he bent his inscrutable dark gaze on my face as if to read my inmost thoughts—"I can wait."

It was a threat, I felt; but here Kitty, considering it an appropriate moment to offer cake and wine, advanced, salver in hand, with Dr. Millar scowling at her elbow. Sir Claude filled a glass with champagne, looked eloquently at me over the brim and drained it in pledge—of what? He broke off a crumb of cake with the same air of one performing a solemn rite, never looking to right or left the while, but straight into my eyes.

Then he bade us farewell. "It has made me very happy to know that we part friends," he told us. I had never admitted anything of the sort, but it was not the time to argue. "Will you prove it by accepting a small remembrance of this day?" He laid a tiny parcel on the table beside me, held out his hand, which I could hardly refuse, and departed, leaving the assembled company under the impression that it was some distinguished and highly valued friend of ours who had graced our wedding with his presence.

When we opened the parcel it proved to contain a tiny lace brooch, a bar of gold, on which was perched a diamond fly. As a gift it was unobtrusive enough, but evidently of more value than I cared to accept from him. I may say here that it was a trouble to me for some hours to come. Miles didn't want to set eyes on it again; I felt I never could wear it; but neither knew how to return it without offering the giver a direct affront. It has finally taken its place as the chief glory of Kitty's trinket-box and a source of pure joy to her; also she considers it only her rightful compensation for all she has suffered on account of "that man in the fur-trimmed coat."

The Lord Chancellor has been pleased to approve of Miles and me as fit and proper persons to have the charge of Muriel, the brightness and delight of our lives.

For the rest, that household, like the nation, is happy which has no story to tell, and such is ours.

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MISS LATIMER OF BRYANS.

BY ELEANOR C. PRICE.

Author of "Alexia," "Red Towers," "The Little One," etc.

CHAPTER XIX. AT HOME.

POPPY LATIMER and her aunt came quietly home together about three weeks after this, arriving at Bryans one wild and windy evening.

Hardly anybody knew when they were coming. The old coachman, who had driven Poppy to her christening, stopped on his way down and took Mr. Cantillon to the station. He came back with them to the Court, where he dined and slept, the usual plan in bad weather, and was catechised by Poppy as to the exact state of everybody in the parish. While she was away for half an hour, talking to Mrs. Arch, her old nurse, and one or two other faithful old friends, he sat in his favourite corner of the drawing-room, and watched Fanny as she fidgeted about, with happy, peaceful eyes which were not now afraid to look into a bright future. He had not yet actually asked Fanny if she knew what he was thinking about, and if Poppy's marriage might be the signal for theirs. Of the first he felt tolerably sure; as to the second, he had little doubt of her answer.

The time for Poppy's wedding was not yet fixed. There were a good many arrangements to be made, and no one had gone beyond saying with a certain vagueness, "early in the year."

"Not in Lent," said the Rector.

"Not till after Lent, I dare say. I hope not," Fanny answered a little mechanically.

She was walking slowly round the immense square room, visiting distant tables, giving an impatient push now and then to a stately old Oriental vase or a large illustrated book. The room was lighted by several lamps and a blazing fire, but it seemed so dark and vast that nothing could make it cheerful, except perhaps the lighting up of the enormous old glass chandelier which hung in the middle. The dingy brown and dim gold with which the walls were papered was nearly hidden by full-length portraits in heavy frames, and dark, Dutch-looking landscapes. A French buhl clock, perhaps as old as Louis the Fourteenth, ticked slowly on the high carved mantelpiece, which was itself very handsome. Rows of china figures, half lost in shadow, stood on each side of the clock. There were a good many stiff-looking tables, six or seven large sofas, a few very comfortable chairs, large and roomy, and some old-fashioned ones of sterner make. The carpet and the heavy curtains were a little worn. The chairs and sofas were all covered with various ancient chintzes in large patterns, faded by time and washing. Very little in fact had been done to the room since the marriage of Poppy's grandfather, nothing since that of her father.

Two Skye terriers, tired with the rapture of their mistress's return, lay stretched on the large soft hearth-rug and could hardly be distinguished from it.

"I really am a little out of patience with Poppy," said Miss Latimer in her most reasonable voice. "I mean to have my own way, however—and you must stand by me, Henry, for she thinks a great deal of your opinion. The whole house wants doing up and refurnishing, from the garret to the cellar. It is completely out

of date, and comfortless to the last degree. Besides, these old-fashioned arrangements are terribly extravagant. Look at such a grate as that, for instance! Hideously ugly, and burns half a ton of coal every night, besides logs. Don't laugh; I'm very much in earnest. Poppy says my ideas are extravagant; they are nothing of the kind. Such a house as this is most expensive to live in. She ought to remember that life now will be a very different thing from what it has been for the last few years—only two quiet women, and no entertaining at all—or even what it was in the last year or two of her dear father and mother. Young married people like her and Arthur will be quite in a different position; a great deal will be expected from them. I almost think it will be worth while to pull the house down and build another. Such rooms as these are enough to break one's heart—no recesses, no corners, nothing picturesque; no place for poetry or art or imagination. Just a—rectangular area—is that right, Henry?"

"Quite right, my dear friend," he said gently. "But I'm afraid you can hardly plead economy as a reason for pulling down this beautiful old house."

"Oh! You admire it, do you? Well, I must say I like modern comfort, and art, and all that. But of course one feels provoked when a girl who ought to see it all so plainly turns round and says that she wants nothing new and no alteration whatever. But I don't despair. We have time before us. Mrs. Nugent is coming by-and-by, and I'm quite sure of what she will say. No young man would care to live in such an old-fashioned, uncomfortable barn as this, so we shall have Arthur on our side, and then Poppy is sure to give in. At least, Henry, if you like the house, you must confess that paint and papers and furniture and everything are in the last stage of wretchedness."

"I dare say it is a little shabby," said Mr. Cantillon, who hesitated about disagreeing with her. "But I don't myself care for those smart modern drawing-rooms straight out of an upholsterer's shop. I am afraid, you know, I like a room to look—as this does—as if one or two generations had lived in it. And you wouldn't of course send away the pictures?"

"Nearly all of them, I certainly would. This room is not a picture gallery. They can go into the hall, and the dining-room, and the passages upstairs."

"Plenty there already," murmured the Rector. "Well, I should make a few changes in this room. Perhaps a new carpet—and I particularly dislike that chandelier, which seems incongruous. But you know, I suppose, what is the one great fault of the room?"

"Hopeless ugliness," replied Miss Fanny. "It may sound unfeeling, but from a child I always thought so. Utterly stupid and uninteresting. Those pictures of my ancestors may be fine, but they bore me to extinction."

"No, no, Fanny. Let the pictures stay. Introduce some books, some intelligent modern books, and, if you like, send most of those great illustrated volumes away into the library."

"Books—yes, I dare say. Your remedy for everything," said Fanny, smiling, and she came to sit down near him in the corner of a large sofa. "Well, at present it is no use talking to Poppy. She won't listen to me—I bide my time till Arthur and his mother are here. Then you will see! But dear Poppy, at present, is quite taken up with match-making."

"Indeed!"

"Yes. We must not talk about it openly; but if you can help towards bringing it to pass you will earn eternal gratitude from Poppy. I should be very glad, too, for reasons of my own."

"Who are the victims? Anybody in the village?"

Miss Latimer leaned a little towards him and whispered: "Geoffrey Thorne and Maggie Farrant."

"Oh!" The Rector gave a kind of whistle of astonishment. "She wishes that, does she? Why?"

"Well, she takes an interest in the man. So do you, don't you, Henry? She thinks him clever; which I don't. Do you? Of course it would be a good match for him. The girl is thought very pretty, and will have some money. Then really, as to Maggie, nothing better could happen to a girl like her. I have encouraged the idea because I think, just as you do, that Poppy has spoilt the girl—most unfortunately, though with the kindest intentions—and as time goes on she will find her rather seriously on her hands. For instance, I don't quite see how she can have her at her parties, and so on. The girl will expect it, no doubt—conceited little puss—and there is no knowing what Poppy in her dear Quixotism may feel herself obliged to do. I always disapproved of the friend-

ship, and now I see a great deal of awkwardness in the future. Arthur's friends will be coming, too, and—well, I should like Miss Maggie and those eyes of hers to be safe out of the way."

Mr. Cantillon stared into the fire.

"The plan has certain points," he said, hesitating. "Only—does Poppy think that girl good enough for Geoffrey Thorne? And how do you know that he will take a fancy to her?"

"I believe she is a nice girl in her way. They are fairly equal in birth, I suppose. One can't make these things happen, of course," said Miss Latimer, though she smiled and coloured faintly as she thought of a very recent piece of successful match-making. "I only say that Poppy would be glad, and so should I. There is no more to be said; only sometimes people's friends find it possible to give a little push or pull in the right direction, you know."

"I am not clever at pushing and pulling," said the Rector thoughtfully.

Geoffrey's face seemed to rise between him and the fire, and he heard again the young fellow's voice telling his hopeless love-story.

"He may marry some day," thought Mr. Cantillon. "But not now, not here. Not from pique and disappointment; he is too good for that. And, therefore, not for years and years."

He was a little glad that Poppy came back into the room at this moment, full of some village story that Mrs. Arch and the old nurse had been telling her. Neither Geoffrey's nor Maggie's name was mentioned again that evening.

It was a wild and windy night. The sea of flame, made of glowing beech-trees, on which the house looked down in this last week of October, lost much of its beauty in the storm that swayed the branches and laid a thick gold carpet of leaves in the avenue. Mr. Cantillon could not sleep, and lay thinking sadly, though something told him that the happiness of his own life was assured, and that Fanny Latimer, with her pretty figure and bright eyes and becoming gown, and the smile that he had always loved, and the faults that only amused him, and the liveliness that enchanted him, would crown their old friendship before very long by giving herself to him altogether. He had always an excuse for Fanny. Her heresies about the old house and the pictures were quite explained by the fact that, as it sometimes happens, she had more of the nature of her

own pretty and frivolous little mother than of the more stately Latimer line. They would far more willingly have claimed Poppy as belonging to them.

The Rector's waking dreams had thus a background of content; but his kind heart and fanciful mind were a good deal more occupied with Geoffrey Thorne, and these women's preposterous plans for him, than with any joy of his own. He was very sorry that Geoffrey had given up his wise plan of going away to paint and study in Spain. He had been unable to understand Poppy's motive in asking him not to go. Now of course it was plain, and the good Rector, for once in his life, felt angry with Poppy. She had no right, he thought, to sacrifice a fine young fellow to old Farrant's ignorant grand-daughter, pretty as she might be. Her friendship for the girl, which must have grown out of pity and the want of something to do, did not justify such a piece of match-making as this.

"Miss Porphyria might be ashamed if she knew all," the Rector thought. "No, Fanny, I will have no hand in your conspiracies; on the contrary, I shall try to send him out of the country."

Mr. Cantillon went back to his house the next morning soon after breakfast. Poppy, standing at the high window of her own little sitting-room, which was partly over the hall and looked down the length of the avenue, saw him as he went. The storm of the night was over, but there was still wind enough to shake down showers of glowing orange on his path, and even on his shoulders.

Poppy's room was plain, old-fashioned, and a little disorderly, without any attempt at modern ornament, except a few quaint pots, generally very ugly, which she had picked up in her travels. Among other untidinesses her collection of Herzhelm pottery lay half unpacked on the floor. Books lay in piles here and there. Poppy liked books but cared nothing for editions or bindings, and many of those in her bookcases, which had been presents in smart binding from friends and relations, looked both supercilious and neglected among a crowd of old childish favourites with loose leaves and split backs. On the walls hung a few old landscapes, dark and Dutch-looking, like those in the drawing-room. Over the chimney-piece was a lovely Sir Joshua half-length of a beautiful fair woman, a Miss Elizabeth Latimer of those days. Poppy's father had given the

picture to her when she was a child because of the likeness which no one could help seeing, and which had now become most strikingly remarkable. Photographs of Poppy's father and mother, rather stiff and melancholy in effect, and giving little idea of the Squire's joviality and his wife's sweetness, stood on the mantelpiece; there also was Aunt Fanny's pretty picture, the same that was enshrined in Mr. Cantillon's study. Poppy had that morning brought in a smart and distinguished-looking photograph of Arthur Nugent in a French leather frame. She set it down on the table with a lingering look, and then walked forward and stood at the window. There she looked out on the flying clouds and gleams of sunshine, the waving and rustling of the beautiful yellow trees, the moving shadows on bright green grass and brown even road. Down by the bridge she could see the river flashing as it ran, bank-full from recent rains.

Poppy stood and looked for a few minutes, till the Rector had disappeared, and no living thing moved in the avenue. Then she turned round to the table and took up Arthur's photograph again.

"Will you like it, dear?" she said, under her breath. "It all belongs to you." After a moment she sighed. "What have I done to be so happy!"

They had been engaged for nearly a month now; most of this time had been spent together, and Poppy was, as she said and thought, perfectly happy. Arthur's naturally gentle and affectionate nature made it easy for him to give her all she wanted, and that, indeed, was not much. Poppy's love for him was not of a kind to admit any impatience, selfishness, or even fancifulness. She was one of those very rare people who forget themselves when they are in love, and give themselves without a thought of asking whether the return might not be something even better than it is. Poppy would never have questioned the truth of those words, repeated by some careful hearer to St. Paul, that "it is more blessed to give than to receive." Perhaps, in truth, her realisation of all she could give Arthur might have struck mean minds—it did strike Alice Nugent so—as being a little exaggerated, almost arrogant; and yet in Poppy's heart there was a humility which counted herself the least of these things, and all put together quite unworthy of the hero she thought him.

A few minutes of happy dreaming

suggested that she must write to Arthur. She turned towards the large old writing-table which Aunt Fanny thought so absurd in a girl's sitting-room. As she turned, her eyes were caught by the bright colours and gilded mount and frame of a water-colour drawing which stood on a chair behind the door. It was Geoffrey Thorne's sketch of Herzheim. There it all was, the blue-green lake, the masses of changing trees, the red-roofed town with its quaint towers and windows and chimneys, the white ramparts of the Castle, the dreamy line of mountain background. She stood and looked, smiling and really delighted. Herzheim, happiest place on earth! There, on that height above the town, she had first seen Arthur.

A kind thought of the artist was not far away. It was certainly better than many of his sketches; there was more imagination in it, more atmosphere; the colouring was softer and more natural. She was very much obliged to Geoffrey, and thought that she must write at once to thank him. She moved slowly away, her eyes still lingering on the bright foreign scene, which now in autumn England seemed a dream. Sitting down at her writing-table, she took a large sheet of paper and began:

"My own Arthur——"

She had not written a page, but was quite absorbed in her letter, when there came a very gentle tap at the door. She neither heard nor answered it. Then the door was softly opened, and a girl glided in; a voice at the back of her chair murmured, "Darling!" She started, flushed crimson, pushed her letter out of sight, and turned laughing, though with a sort of confusion, to receive Maggie Farrant's eager caress.

In a few minutes they were both sitting on the large sofa near the window, half of which was piled with papers and books. Poppy had quite recovered herself; she was really fond of the girl, and found something irresistible in her affection, shown in a hundred pretty looks and ways. It was not difficult, after the first, to turn the talk away from herself. Maggie was quick enough to understand her friend, and knew that in time she should hear everything she wanted to know. So they talked of Maggie's self and all her doings, and of her picture, which she was longing to show; and then, much to Poppy's satisfaction, she went into raptures of admiration over Geoffrey's sketch of

Herzheim, and came lightly back towards the sofa with words that Poppy rejoiced to hear.

"I think he is such a nice man, you know, so clever and so good. And I almost love him, I do really, for having saved you in Paris that day. Tell me, darling, were you——"

The girl stopped suddenly on her way across the room. Poppy, sitting half in the shadow of the curtains, leaning back with a happy, interested smile, was conscious that she was once more colouring up to her hair. It was also true, though she hardly knew it, that a faint shade of annoyance, involuntary, uncontrollable, passed over her face at Maggie's next words, spoken as she bent eagerly to look at Arthur's photograph:

"Poppy, dear, is this Mr. Nugent? You never told me how handsome he was! He's perfectly sweet!"

Poppy could not blame the girl if something jarred, if something was not quite bearable, in her lively and not very refined admiration. It was all very well, bestowed on Geoffrey Thorne's picture of Herzheim, but on Arthur—this indeed was different. But Maggie was not to be blamed; that Poppy felt and knew. She had not, poor child, a "*sentiment de nuances exquis*." Poppy had made a friend, and must take her as she was, though now and then a little painful surprise might come of it. Any such surprise must be, and was, hidden in secret depths of a mind which was both just and generous.

"Come back here," she said, "and I will tell you all about Paris. Yes, he saved my life, for in another moment the horse would have trodden upon me."

THE POETS OF THE PULPIT.

IN TWO PARTS PART I.

THE Church has given to the world a long succession of statesmen—Anselm, Lambard, Becket, Wolsey, and Laud, in our own country (we might justly add Wilberforce and Tait); Richelieu and Mazarin in France; Ximenes and Alberoni in Spain; and not a few of the Popes, such as Gregory the First, Sextus the Fifth, Julian the Second, Leo the Tenth, and the present wearer of the triple crown. She has given us also philosophers and scholars of the highest rank, and from the calm and leisure of cell and cloister has sprung many a monumental work of successful research

and laborious meditation. Further, it has given us poets; but it is noticeable that these as a rule have not been filled with "the divine air." They have sung with ease and grace, some with a certain degree of strength, almost all with the serious reflection suggested by familiar contact with the graver issues of life; but they have seldom attained to the higher spheres of poetry—to those "celestial altitudes" which the great Master-Singers have made their own, where they sit and hear the voices of the gods. That is to say, they have not risen out of the second class, and a great many have never risen even into that. Probably the measured order, the prescribed forms, the moral and intellectual discipline of the Church, are unfavourable to any bold reach of imagination or broadening range of thought.

Cædmon, from whose "Paraphrase of the Creation and Fall of Satan" Milton did not disdain to borrow, was a monk of Whitby. Abbot Aldhelm of Malmesbury was of great repute as a singer and inventor of English verse; and a picturesque story is told how that, in the guise of a gleeman or minstrel, he would stand on the bridge between town and country, and sing, to prevent people from running home directly after mass, as they were wont to do, without waiting for the sermon; so that the layman's aversion to the sermon is a thing of twelve centuries' date! Then came Bishop Cymwulf, with his poetical version of the "Legend of St. Helen"; and after a long interval Ware, the author of the romance of "The Brut," who was made Bishop of St. Asaph, in reward, I suppose, of his poetical efforts, as in the eighteenth century men were elevated to the episcopal bench for editing Greek plays. A name to be held in honour is that of Walter Map, or Mapes, who was not only a poet but a wit—the first clerical wit, perhaps, on record. Map invented the character of Bishop Goliath in order to cover his sharp attacks on the corruption of the clergy. In his book "De Nugis" he anticipated the productions of a large class of book-makers—the writers of "Diaries," and "Reminiscences," and "Recollections"—though it is true that, as became a bishop, he mingled his contemporary gossip with much serious comment. But his great claim to the gratitude of posterity—which, like other debtors, is never very ready to pay up its debts—is that he re-wrote, or rather re-created and spiritualised the Arthurian legends, in-

fusing into them the life-blood of Christianity, and endowing our literature with the precious gifts of the fables of "Lancelot of the Lake," the "Quest of the Holy Graal," and the "Passing of Arthur." Here we have poetical invention in its highest and purest form, and, perhaps, Bishop Map is, on the whole, the greatest poet the pulpit has ever known. Layamon, who first told the story of Brut to Englishmen in their own language, was a rural priest, and administered the services of the Church in a quiet Worcestershire village. The author of "The Ormulum" was an Augustinian canon. The charming fancy of "The Owl and the Nightingale" we owe to a south country priest, Nicholas of Guildford. The illustrious Robert Grosseteste, Bishop of Lincoln, an energetic Church reformer and an enthusiastic scholar—the mere catalogue of his writings fills three-and-twenty closely printed quarto pages!—relieved his heavier labours by composing Latin and French verse—not, it must be owned, of much account.

Passing by the rhymed chronicles written by monk and priest—"most commonplace of men," as Taine calls them—we come to Richard Rolle, the Hermit of Hampole, who was one of the first to attempt a task which no one has accomplished successfully, the translation into English verse of David's Psalms; and also perpetrated a didactic poem in ten thousand lines (or thereabouts) entitled "The Pricke of Conscience." Did it not prick him while he was wasting time and effort on this superfluous labour? His pulpit performances seem to have excelled his poetical; for it is recorded of one of his sermons that many of his hearers wept over it, and protested that they had never heard its like before. It has never been a characteristic of the clergy to assist in evoking the patriotism of a people; but John Barbour, Archdeacon of Aberdeen, was a Scot to the heart's core, and in his poem of "The Bruce" vividly reflects the "perfidium ingenium" of his countrymen. "Ah, Freedom," he exclaims, "is a noble thing! Freedom makes man to have liking"—a commonplace now, but a grand sentiment to be uttered in the fourteenth century, and uttered by a Churchman! John Lydgate, the monk of Bury, wrote several moral tales in fluent verse, but we find more of the true stuff that was in him in his satirical ballad, the first of its kind, "London Lickpenny."

Into the mouth of Earl Douglas, the

"Bell the Cat" Earl, Scott, in his "Marmion," puts the grateful exclamation:

Thanks to St. Botham, son of mine,
Save Gawain, ne'er could pen a line!

Gawain was the accomplished ecclesiastic who wrote "The Palace of Honour," in which he celebrates Virgil and Chaucer, and executed a fine translation of "The Æneid"; "the singular fruit," as Andrew Lang calls it, "of a barren and unlearned time"—a translation which could have been made only by a poet. I am sorry to say that after Gawain was made Bishop of Dunkeld by the lettered Pope Leo the Tenth, he forsook the service of the Muses and plunged into political strife, which eventually drove him a refugee to the Court of Henry the Eighth. The Bishop had a pretty wit. Meeting James Beaton in the church of Greyfriars, he urged him to desist from hostilities against his nephew. Bishop Beaton affirmed on his conscience that peace was his dearest object in life, and by way of emphasis struck his breast with a blow that rang on the coat of mail concealed beneath his vestments. "My lord," replied Gawain, "I perceive your conscience is not good. I hear it chattering" (i.e., telling tales).

It is noticeable that in Elizabeth's reign the pulpit almost ceased to contribute to the ranks of the minstrels. Probably the clergy were under the influence of the great religious change which had taken place; and, moreover, they would seem to have been men of little learning and less inclination for the graces of culture. Those of the higher clergy who possessed capacity and scholarship were attracted to the pastures of theology. Bishop Joseph Hall lives in our literature, it is true, as the founder of a great school of satirists; but his satires were written while he was still a very young man; and in the closing years of the Elizabethan era. Dr. Donne, Dean of St. Paul's, the pioneer of the metaphysical poets—to use Dr. Johnson's not very satisfactory qualification, which was probably suggested to him by Dryden's criticism, that Donne affected the metaphysics not only in his satires but in his amorous verses, where they are certainly out of place—belonged to the reign of James the First. The momentous religious struggle which now began to engage the energies of the clergy necessarily diverted them from "the walks of the Muses," and poets and pulpits drew far apart, like cliffs which had been rent asunder. A few, however, still found leisure to sing, like

George Herbert, the parson of Bemerton, who, in the poems he collected under the title of "The Temple," earned for himself the title of the Church's Poet; and Phineas Fletcher, the incumbent of Holgay, in Norfolk, who, while a young man, wrote his strange allegorical poem of "The Purple Island." The staunch old loyalist, Bishop Corbet, of Norwich, wrote many jests against the Puritans. There was more of the humorist about him, however, than the poet. It was he who, when he was upset along with his plump chaplain, Dr. Stubbings, in a miry lane, so happily described the situation—Stubbings, said the Bishop, was up to his elbows in mud, and he was up to his elbows in Stubbings.

If Bishop Corbet were more of the humorist than the poet, Robert Herrick was more of the poet than the priest. In his vicarage at Dean Prior, where he lived with his faithful servant, Prue, and his pet pig, which he taught to drink like himself, he wrote those dainty lyrics and took those swallow-flights of song, and coined those felicitous epigrams which are among the tireless delights of any true lover of poetry. Some of them, nay, a good many of them, do not accord with the spirit of the message he was charged to deliver from his pulpit; but in his "Noble Numbers" one may note the expression of a profound religious feeling, which seems to show that the paganism of his lighter moods was partly assumed. At all events, he has left us snatches of lyrical music so sweet and true that they tempt one to condone his frequent worldliness and over indulgence in sensuous enjoyment.

After the Restoration we meet with no clerical poet until we come to the ponderous pages of Thomas Sprat, Bishop of Rochester, who wrote a poem "To the Happy Memory of Oliver Cromwell," in his unregenerate days, and having "found salvation" after the Restoration, became chaplain to the Duke of Buckingham of "graceless memory," and "a courtier of the King's." His best effort, because his sincerest, is his monody on the death of his friend Cowley—whose biography he wrote—but even this is of the sort in which neither gods nor clowns delight.

Dean Swift must not be omitted from our record, though it is not as preacher or poet that men think of that cynical and powerful intellect which so easily ran the whole gamut from the most brilliant wit to the coarsest humour. According to Stella, "the Dean could write beautifully

on a broomstick." With the ease of conscious genius he could write on almost any subject, except those which belong to the higher range of thought and feeling; but in his verse he deliberately chose to write on broomsticks or the most trivial and vulgar themes. When he attempted something more serious he was not successful. His "Cadenus and Vanessa" is, as Taine says, "a threadbare allegory, in which the author's prosaic freaks tear his Greek frippery."

Most of the poets of the pulpit are more or less professional in their verse. The gown of the divine is worn with Apollo's wreath of bays. But Swift not only throws off his gown, he stamps upon and bemires it; while the wreath sits awkwardly upon his irreverent head. There is nothing of the Christian spirit in his poetry; there is as little of the Hellenic. "I am for every man's working on his own materials," he said, "and producing only what he can find within himself." This is the severest condemnation that can be pronounced on his poetical work. It is made up with his own materials—with the cynicism, the coarseness, the sardonic laughter, the ghastly pleasantry, the startling honesty, that he found within himself.

A very different man—with a very different sum of intellectual force—was good Bishop Ken, whose memory will always be kept green by the Morning and Evening Hymns, which he wrote in his sunny parsonage in the Isle of Wight, singing them to his lute every day when he arose, and before he retired to rest. Whether in priestly vestments or the poet's singing robes, his was a serenely beautiful soul. His life was truer and sweeter poetry than any he wrote.

The name of Pomfret—the Rev. John Pomfret, Rector of Maldon—does not appear in our later anthologies; yet there are some graceful lines in his poem of "The Choice," in which he records his conception of a happy life. The ideal is not a very lofty one, but it will serve. It is, at any rate, beyond the standard which Swift had set up in his verses of "The Wish."

Probably few of the readers of Thomas Parnell, whose "Hermit" Mr. Edmund Gosse admires so much, and whose "Night Piece" and "Hymn to Contentment" everybody admires, remember that he was Vicar of Finglas and Archdeacon of Clogher. Archidiaconal poets are rare indeed, the making of poetry, I suppose, being

not included in "archidiaconal functions;" but I remember an Archdeacon Wrongham, who wrote prize poems, and translations, and "vers de société," which were better than his sermons; and was altogether an accomplished and amiable Archdeacon. But to return. Parnell belonged to Pope's literary circle, another member of which was also parson and poet, namely, William Browne, Vicar of Eye, in Suffolk, who largely helped the little valetudinarian bard in his translation of "The Odyssey," and had a happy knack of imitating his cadences.

Of Dr. Isaac Watts, the Nonconformist divine, it is enough to say that scarcely any collection of hymns would be considered complete without some of his more successful verses, and that it would be unfair to judge him on the merits of his children's "Divine and Moral Songs," since they belong to a school and a time far removed from our tastes and sympathies. "Let dogs delight to bark and bite" in his immortal stanzas; the boy and girl of to-day demand a very different music.

So we pass on to the Rev. John Dyer, who in turn was Rector of Belchford, of Kerkly, and Coningsby, and varied the performance of his pastoral duties by the composition of "Grongar Hill"—the first poem of the kind in our language—the "Ruins of Rome," and "The Fleece": three poems which deserve many more readers than they find. Dyer's versification is always graceful and fluent; his sympathy with nature is as sincere as it is simple. He has an observant eye, and what he observes knows how to convey to the reader by a felicitous phrase, suggesting an instantaneous picture. If he is neglected now, in the rush of new poets, with more tinkling of cymbals and blaring of trumpets than suited his modest genius, his shade may be consoled by remembering that a poet of kindred taste, but wider intellectual range, has done him justice:

Yet pure and powerful minds, hearts meek and still,
A grateful few shall love thy modest lay,
Long as the shepherd's bleating flock shall stray
O'er naked Snowdon's wide aerial waste,
Long as the thrush shall pipe on Grongar Hill.

But parson-poets are crowding upon us. There is the Rev. John Blair, Presbyterian minister, who spent most of his years in the seclusion of a Haddingtonshire manse, and is remembered by the one poem into which he condensed the thought of the life thus monotonously spent. He chose quite a professional subject, "The Grave,"

and treated it in a professional tone, but in an unconventional manner. Much vigorous writing is to be found in it; and if his sermons were as full of matter and as tersely expressed, why, the peasants of Athelstaneford had good reason to be thankful. The finest passage in the poem is, however, the close:

Thus at the shut of even the weary bird
Leaves the wide air, and, in some lonely brake,
Cowers down and dozes till the dawn of day,
Then claps his well-fledged wings and bears away.

Professional subjects were also in favour with the Rev. Dr. Edward Young, incumbent of Welwyn, Herts, who published his great poem on life, death, and immortality—"Night Thoughts"—in 1743, the year in which was published Blair's "Grave." Like Wordsworth, Young could soar very high and sink very low. He has written some of the best and much of the worst poetry ever written, and it is noticeable that he wrote his worst when he threw off the gown of the divine and attempted to rival the men of wit and fashion who figured in contemporary society—when he perpetrated Pindarics and trifled with tragedies. If Young's many volumes were condensed into a duodecimo—two thousands of pages "boiled down," so to speak, into a hundred, as the makers of invalids' food concentrate ever so many pounds of meat into a cup of beef-extract—the result would prove to be of the best and highest.

Frequent discussion has arisen on the question why poetry, when applied to sacred subjects, has so seldom been successful. Dean Stanley once suggested, by way of reply, first, that the moment poetry becomes a vehicle of theological argument it also becomes essentially prosaic, as much, or almost as much, as if it were employed for arguments on political or philosophical problems. Second, that the very greatness of the words which from Biblical or ecclesiastical usage have been consecrated to the sublime thoughts of religion, misleads the writer into the belief that they are of themselves sufficient to carry on the poetic afflatus. And, third, that Biblical metaphors have afforded a temptation to pursue into detail, and especially into anatomical detail, expressions derived from the physical structure of the human frame. It does not seem that, as a reply to the general question this is at all satisfactory, though it may be accepted as sufficiently explaining the subsidiary question which Stanley had in his mind: why are poetry and hymnody, as a rule, so far

apart? The two Wesleys, John and Charles, were good hymn writers; but they were not poets, though Charles sometimes approached very nearly to the poetic standard. As a rule, they could not get out of the pulpit. They preached, and prayed, and harangued; but they did not sing. Only in three or four of Charles's hymns does he strike a lyric note.

That brawny, reckless, dissolute, but gifted ex-curate, Charles Churchill—author of "The Rosciad," and of other satires which, if less brilliant, are smart enough in their easy audacity—can hardly claim a place among our pulpit-poets. Certainly the pulpit was the last place in the world where he felt at home. The club, the tavern, the coffee-house, the pit of the theatre—these were the haunts which the coarse texture of his mind found most congenial. A wasted life was cut short by a premature death, and a falsehood was inscribed on his tombstone: "Life to the last enjoyed, here Churchill lies"; for any real or useful enjoyment of life he had never known. As a poet, his qualities have been indicated by Cowper with graphic precision:

Surly and slovenly, and bold and coarse,
Too proud for art and trusting in mere force,
Spendthrift alike of money and of wit,
Always at speed and never drawing bit;
He struck the lyre in such a careless mood,
And so disdained the rules he understood;
The laurel seemed to wait on his command,
He snatched it rudely from the Muse's hand.

'Tis but a sere and withered laurel now!

TO ELTHAM PALACE.

THE weather, though fine for the moment, threatens a change. The tide is low, and London Bridge towers above as if on stilts, and the steamers hanging together in the pool, or taking in cargo under swinging cranes, are almost aground. The gray battlements and turrets of the Tower shine almost white against the dark masses of vapour behind them; and the new bridge rears its huge girders high overhead, forming a lofty portal beneath which the tallest ships may pass. The river opens out and closes in again encompassed by wharves and warehouses, chimneys, docks dry and wet, old crazy stairs, old crazy taverns, old crazy piers, great blocks of buildings painfully new with lifts and scoops and elevators. Here are Wapping, and Rotherhithe, and Limehouse, and Stepney church glowering out of the gloom,

all steamy and misty from a kind of stew of barges and tugs and black steam colliers and all kinds of rusty old craft. Then a turn of the river shuts everything in, and above the grimy flat shore appear pleasant little hills shining forth from the murky haze.

To ascend from the level of low water in the river to the top of Greenwich Hill is like mounting Jack's famous beanstalk, and at every knot or notch a fresh scene is revealed. Now it is Greenwich town with the long colonnades of its hospital on the one hand, and the porticos of the new seamen's hospital—vice the old Dreadnought retired—where invalided seamen of all nations and complexions are taking the air. While over the way everybody hangs out attractive notices to tempt the climber from the track. "Stay here, Jack," they cry, with various voices, "here for your sumptuous dinner, here for your lightsome tea, here for your cool tankard in a delightful garden hung with scarlet-runners." Then as you reach the level of the park gates other temptations assail you. Try your strength, or measure your weight or your height, or set agoing the model of a coal mine, or witness the tricks of the wonderful performing birds, with other deluding joys spread for the entertainment of the passer-by.

But once within the park there is nothing to hinder us but the rain, which spreads in a driving sheet and blots out the whole scene beyond a circle of wet turf and dripping, wind-tossed trees. The massy bole of an old elm affords sufficient shelter, and presently the squall passes over, and as we reach the level of the Observatory, a gleam of sunshine breaks through the clouds and illumines the whole scene, with great London below floating in a hazy kind of light, with the river broad and shining, and buildings showing here and there, mingled with clouds and fume, steeples, masts, and chimneys, in a mysterious expanse of indefinite grandeur.

Then we come to the upper gate of the park, where there is a "restauration" under the trees, and where fawns come timidly up and mutely ask for buns. Beyond the gate is Blackheath, the real wide, wild, breezy heath. It is like coming into another world. We have ascended the beanstalk, and have come upon life on a different level. Down there, ships and smother, toil and trouble, all seething together in fog and fume; here is sunshine and fine weather, with donkeys to ride,

and phaetons to drive, and nothing to do but to play golf all day long. How they enjoy it, these old boys in their red jackets, as they come skirmishing across the heath with a signaller in front waving a red flag to show where the holes are and where the balls lie. Here is a gouty old golfer who hobbles up to the ball on sticks, but once there he is all right, and draws himself up for the stroke, and away flies the ball right over the gravel-pit, and fairly placed for the next hole. And golfing, they say, is an ancient pastime at Blackheath, brought there by King Jamie when he first came from Scotland with all his train.

But when you have crossed Blackheath you are in London again: pleasant suburban London, yet retaining one useful feature of country origin in the direction posts that stand at the cross-roads, of which an arm points clearly to Lee and Eltham, and to Maidstone beyond, if you have a mind to go so far. Surely we soon shall be clear of the town, and among the green fields, with footpaths and tempting stiles which show a winding way among trees and hedges. For surely we have read that Eltham Palace is now a barn where corn is stacked, with a farmhouse close by built out of fragments of old masonry. But these anticipations have not reckoned with the march of mighty London. On and on we go, thinking soon to come upon the country. But there is nothing of the kind, but, instead, mile upon mile of asphalt pavement between an avenue of villas, lawns, flower-beds, grassy paddocks, nearly all beautifully kept, the pictures of neatness, and with gay decorative effects, but all very still and quiet, as if the world hereabouts were taking a midday siesta.

Then, after miles of this suburban scenery, there really is a bit of country, fields and hedges, with photographers waiting at the corners to take your portraits. A little bit of a brook winds its way through the flat ground and is spanned by a bridge, although a good sized drain pipe would carry its present volume of waters. But it is known as the Quaggy river, and is very floody at times, says a local informant. And this is Eltham Bridge, and yonder is Eltham Green, a triangular patch of turf adorned by conspicuous notice boards, according to which nobody is to dump rubbish on the green without the previous sanction of the "Woods and Forests." And through hedges peer the notices which

inform us that the "Crown" has eligible building plots on hand, as to which apply to the same Woods and Forests; and all this suggests our approach to a Royal demesne. If in bargaining for one of these eligible plots one insisted on an investigation of title from the very beginning, there would be an affair with Alwolve the Saxon, who held from the Confessor, and dealings with Odo of Bayeux, the de Vesels, Anthony Bec of Durham, and other notables of fierce old feudal times.

The road winds upwards and upwards from the flats of the Quaggy river, and pleasant glimpses are obtained of the surrounding country undulating among the green hills of Kent. A tufted knoll rising above the red roofs of the town is pointed out as Shooters Hill, famous for Jack Falstaff's exploits, and for many subsequent adventures with dashing highwaymen. For here the main road from Dover, Canterbury, and the coasts of the Channel descended from the Kentish plateau into the great London valley—where time out of mind has passed the traffic from the world beyond the silver streak, and from the rich abundance of the wealthy land of Kent.

But the High Street itself, winding pleasantly upwards, is now the chief feature of the scene with its quaint, old-fashioned aspect. Here a specimen of the original Kentish cottage of wood, weather-boarded and tiled, there a gabled roof of manorial dignity, snug little inns hang out their swinging signs, the new shop bristling with its tins of meats and fruits, the saddlers of the ancient rule, the wheelwrights and the forge where the King's horses may have been shod in ancient days. We must not forget, too, the old manorial garden with its fine warm brick walls, now with gaps yawning here and there, through which the builder drives his wheelbarrows, and the quaint brick summer-house in the angle, looking towards the pleasant landscape, warm and snug, and yet cool and secluded, all hung with ivy and creepers, and speaking of old-fashioned times and the tranquil dignity of existence accompanied by pippins and Canary sack, and of maids all fresh and fragrant in the old, old days. Eltham abounds, too, in quaint rambling dwellings with great sunny gardens, which as they perish are replaced by rows of trim villas, each with its little strip of garden-ground, just a snip from the generous garments of old.

"Palace!" cries the country policeman,

who, from a shady corner, surveys the placid movements of the town with a watchful but benevolent eye. "Yes, you'll find the Palace down the opening opposite the church—only there ain't much to see, only bare walls!" Still bare walls have their interest, and the way to the Palace is not far to seek, for just opposite the church, which is entirely new, there opens out a street of respectable width, the name of which announces its distinguished origin. It is simply the Courtyard, as it might be to the Louvre or the Escorial, quiet enough now, with hardly a dog to wag his tail in it, but thronged enough in old times with men-at-arms, courtiers, falconers, horses, hounds, saucy pages, and saucier maids of the Palace. What was it like, think you, in 1364, when Edward the Third gave a great feast at Eltham to John of France, his prisoner, and the Black Prince was of the party? Or when, later, Richard the Second kept Christmas here year after year with all the pomp and luxury of the age? Or still a century later, when Edward the Fourth, having repaired and beautified the Palace so as to make it almost the rival of Windsor, kept Christmas here with some two thousand guests?

Yes, there is a sort of fragrance of ancient Royalty about the place. A happy old rambling house, all over gables and creepers, is built on the foundations of Royal store-houses and stables. To listen to the stories that are told of underground passages, and secret vaults and chambers, you might fancy that there was still feasting and frolicking among the ghosts of the old monarchy going on below. Nor are these stories by any means unfounded, for a considerable extent of passages and vaults have been actually excavated and explored, and some years ago, in the farmhouse régime, they were shown for a small fee. There are pretty good traces of a subterranean passage leading in the direction of Middle Park, which then formed part of the demesne, some furlongs distant. Middle Park has recently been famous for its stables and its yearlings; but tradition has it that in the days of the old Kings there was stabling there for sixty horses underground, and all kept ready bridled and saddled for the King's secret needs.

But through a somewhat solemn and sombre avenue, where the autumn leaves are dropping one by one, we come to a sunny opening, where an ancient bridge crosses a still more ancient moat. But

there all is brightness and charm, the grassy slopes are like velvet, swans and cygnets float double in the silver waters; a quaint timbered dwelling harmonises sufficiently well with the surroundings, and might be imagined to have been part of the ancient Palace. But this is all modern enchantment, and the existing remains of the old Palace lie further within the moated enclosure. As might have been suspected from the universal change going on, the régime of farm and barn has passed away, and Eltham Palace up to date consists of a handsome modern house of antique appearance, in which some of the relics of the old Palace, such as an old wall and mullioned window, have been skilfully adapted, a building which abuts on and to some extent supports the Royal hall, which still remains untouched, a precious monument of the antique state of our former monarchs. Perhaps there is something lost in the sentiment of the scene, echoed in the lines of a local poet who never rose to fame, but which are worth preserving as a memorial of barn and farmer:

The Hall where oft in feudal pride
Old England peers to council came
When Cressy's field spread far and wide
Edward of Windsor's warlike fame;
Whose rafter'd roof and portals long
Rang while unnumbered harps awoke,
Now echoes but the thresher's song
Or the sad flail's incessant stroke.

But it would be a threshing machine by this time, so that there is less to regret in the departure of the farmer.

The whole enclosure is now in private hands, so that strictly we are trespassers, but it is only necessary to ask at the lodge for admittance, and the lodge keeper unlocks the gate and leads the way to the old hall. A good old retriever wags his tail as if he were rather fond of company than otherwise, and through the grass-grown court and under a ruined portal brings us into the very hall of Kings, with its shattered traceries, and earthen, barn-like floor. You have to read the traces of its former magnificence between the lines of the huge timber props which support it. But there is a magnificent roof of timber, although its more elaborate pendants and carvings have disappeared during the period of neglect and decadence. The badge of Edward the Fourth, the "rose soleil," over one of the portals, as well as the general style, show that the hall, like the chapel of Saint George at Windsor, is the work of that gay but certainly tasteful monarch. But the Tudor rose had some-

thing to do with the matter, and a kind of transept or antechamber bears the cachet of Henry the Seventh's time.

But except the great hall and a few scattered fragments built into the modern house, there is nothing left of the great building but foundations which will endure probably as long as the kingdom holds together, and perhaps longer even, to excite the wonder of the coming New Zealander. A battlemented wall surrounded the whole enceinte, beneath which opened the wide moat. A survey of 1649 gives a list of one fair chapel, one great hall, thirty-six rooms and offices below stairs, with two large cellars; and above stairs, seventeen lodging rooms on the King's side, twelve on the Queen's side, nine on the Prince's side, with seventy-eight rooms round the courtyard, which itself was of the extent of an acre. And in ancient times none other of the King's Palaces, unless that of Westminster, was of greater prestige or importance.

How the place got its popular name as King John's Palace it is not easy to say, for there is nothing to show that it was a favourite resort of his, although his son Henry the Third kept his Christmas here, at times, with great splendour; perhaps because a Prince John was actually born at Eltham, the son of Edward the Second and Isabel of France, who had barely attained his majority when he died, and who has left no mark in history. But two Parliaments were held here in Edward the Third's time: one in 1329, when Mortimer and Isabel were here also, no doubt, in the full zenith of their power, and again in the last years of the great King's life, when he could hardly drag himself to Richmond to die. Of Richard's gay doings here mention has already been made, and we can hardly wonder that the House of Lancaster had no great love for the pleasant resorts of its victim. But when the Wars of the Roses had ended victoriously for the House of York, Edward the Fourth recognised the beauty and pleasantness of the site, and restored it to its former magnificence. Henry the Seventh, too, embellished it much, but his son had no great liking for the place, having all the "goût" of the Grand Turk for building new palaces as well as marrying new wives. But he spent one Christmas at Eltham, 1525, which was known as the "still Christmas," for pestilence was abroad, and none were admitted to the King's table for fear of infection. Queen Elizabeth was here for a short time

in 1559, and in 1612 the churchwardens "paid for ryngers when the Kings Majestie came to lye at Ealthom 12^d." But that visit was the last, it seems, from Royalty, and the Palace fell to decay, was sold and dismantled during the Commonwealth, but restored when Royalty returned, and still belongs to the Crown, although long leased to private hands. The same may be said of the park, which lies at some little distance from the Palace, gracious in its contours and well-timbered, and a pleasant resort for the inhabitants of this once Royal burgh.

That Eltham and all the country round will soon be an integral part of Greater London is now pretty evident, and in the interests of the future population it is to be hoped that the old Royal park will be kept alive for the public benefit. At present it seems as if the ubiquitous speculative builder had the best chance of securing it for his own. But let us hope that some "soufflement" of public opinion may warm the authorities to sufficient public spirit to keep the Royal domain intact.

Among things not generally known is that there is an earldom of Eltham. Prince Fred of Wales was the bearer of that title, and although it is now merged in the Crown, it cannot be said to be extinct.

The way back for us is made easy by a capital well-horsed omnibus, which runs backwards and forwards, at intervals, from Eltham to Blackheath. And there is Eltham Station at about a mile distant from the Palace, while there are pleasant views all round if one has leisure to explore the country. But the finest route after all is the one which we have taken, and as we reach Greenwich once more, really magnificent is the scene, with a full tide, and steam and sail pressing upwards, while the sun in his decline, breaking through masses of heavy clouds, lights up the scene in quite bewildering glory.

"COUNTING THE TIES."

A WESTERN SKETCH.

WHENEVER the word "tramp" is mentioned, I see in my mind's eye a great range of mountains, with one snowy peak rising in the background, and towering up against the deep, hot, blue sky like a gleaming spear-head; a log shanty, consisting of four rough little rooms; a big wood pile of "ties"; and in the foreground a fringe of light green cotton-wood trees,

to mark where the creek wound slowly through its sandy bed, except when it "boomed" in spring, and carried everything before it in a raging brown torrent. This was our Colorado ranch, and here I lived for over a year, the only sign of civilisation being the two railway tracks, between which the shanty lay, the Santa Fé in front, stretching out to Arizona and New Mexico, while behind us, scarcely a hundred yards away, lay the Denver and Rio Grande, on which, when there has been a breakdown, I have counted as many as five trains following each other, so great was the amount of rolling stock on this line.

It is probably owing to these two tracks that my year's experience of the genus "tramp" was so varied; and that we were honoured with as many specimens of the gentlemen who "counted the ties" as any ranch in the States.

When we first arrived we were warned against this class by our very scattered neighbours, American as well as English. But even on this question opinions differed, some holding that it was best to prepare a meal for them whenever asked to do so, and others declaring that the truest wisdom was to shut the door at once in their faces; and that they were like the flies, that summer pest of Colorado, if admitted, for "when you killed one a hundred came to the funeral." We asked eagerly if there would be Indians amongst them, our English mind at once making itself up that we should have the noble savage, in his blanket, as a frequent visitor.

Nothing so exciting, however, was likely to happen, the Utes were kept strictly to their reservation, although the wife of the man we had bought the ranch from told us that fifteen years ago they were as plentiful as the sunflowers, the weed of the district, and she herself had often seen old Colora, their chief, a gentleman who seemed from all accounts to be no better than he should be, ride over the bluff in the buck pasture with a hundred dusky forms at his back. But alas! we were fifteen years too late; no Indians were to be seen "loping" across the prairie, no prairie schooners, with "Pike's Peak or Bust" inscribed on their snowy sails. The only Indian to be seen was one swinging over a shop in Denver City, and during the "Oklahoma Boom" the prairie schooners certainly passed us thick and fast; but only to return, if haply they might, in a few months, men, women,

children, and cattle, mere ghosts of their former selves.

The life was altogether tame to what we pictured it, except when for three months we camped out in one of the mountain parks. We got our letters whenever I chose to ride in for them; we had meat three times a day, and ate it, when cold, with Worcester Sauce and excellent pickles, and if it had not been that there was no hired help to be had for the house, and that we were surrounded by coyotes, rattlesnakes, and tramps, we might have forgotten that we were living several thousand miles away from home. But of these three there was no lack.

Our idea of a tramp at home had been a man who was thankful for an old pair of boots, bread and cheese, and a copper; but we had to put all that aside, the Western tramp being quite another character. Most frequently he had money in his pocket, and if he asked for a meal was quite prepared to pay his "quarter" for it. Very often he was quite as tidily dressed as the ranchmen round, and could usually read and write well, and converse with great common sense on any topic of conversation that might arise at table. For we were sadly undermanned on the ranch, and very often were glad to enlist one or another of the tramps to do a week's work. As the railway track is the high-road across the prairie, and many of them were "counting the ties" from one State to another in search of work, they would be glad to turn to and help for a dollar a day and their food, for of course we had to what was called "grub-stake" them also.

Out West your "hired man" would be very indignant and insulted if you set a second table for him, so they sat down with us; it saved trouble for one thing, and it is never worth while making difficulties for oneself in strange countries by not conforming to their reasonable customs. And three persons cannot expect that their presence should create a social revolution in a year.

It was wonderful to see how well-behaved my tramps were, and how they rendered me many little services not in the bond; they always washed and tidied themselves up before they sat down to a meal with us, and in spite of all the stories I had heard, were very satisfied with whatever was set before them, and very ready to help in the drawing of water and hewing of wood, and other household

"chores" whenever my own "boys" did not happen to be in. The men who "count the ties"—and it may be mentioned here that the phrase arises from the fact that out West the rails are laid over oak ties, placed across the track, and in walking along you step from one tie on to the other—usually avoid the smaller cities that lie along the track, as there are stringent rules against tramps in vogue in many States, and there are fines imposed upon the heads of any household if they give food or money away—a protective measure against the "dead beats" who prey on the inhabitants; for any man with a quarter in his pocket can always get a good meal at the eating-houses. This law, by which they fined the person who gave relief instead of imprisoning the individual who asked for it, was rather a cute notion, and kept the smaller cities—and every place that owns an eating-house dépôt, water-tank, and two or three shanties is called a city—free of importunate beggars.

But it must not be thought that every man who "counted the ties" was without a cent; usually if they came to the ranch for milk or a meal they would offer me six cents, or twenty-five, as the case might be, and the worst off would cut me a whole pile of wood in return for their food. And they were honest also.

The first two tramps who stayed on the ranch were Mexicans, and such bright little fellows they were, too, with the whitest teeth and most contented smile, and a penchant for eating all their food off one plate, and placing their dinner napkins aside as sacred things too good to use, but as both these little ways meant an economy of labour for me I did not baulk their fancy. They slept in the haystacks in the corral, and had their own blankets with them, and would chatter to each other by the hour together in a kind of barbaric Spanish. They were little or no trouble, and I was quite sorry when they tired of the corn-cutting, and walked off one sundown, bestowing on me a parting smile and a smoky topaz. After that we got Montana Bill, a gentleman who was working his way back to that State, where he "concluded to settle up on a chice location on a creek." He stayed over a week with us, and why he was on the tramp I cannot tell. Perhaps, like Mrs. Gilpin, he had "a frugal mind," for I myself saw a hundred-dollar bill in his pocket-book, and he certainly could have got on the cars had he wanted to do so.

Bill came from "back East," which means nowadays anywhere beyond Chicago, and had been riding for a cattle outfit in Montana, and was now going back to take up a bit of land he had seen on a creek there. He had been a little of everything had Bill, hunted with some Russian noble for big game in the North-west and Alaska, ridden pony express with mails in the good old Indian days, and had narrowly escaped being run down by the Sioux twice.

These tales he used to tell us on Sunday nights; other nights he would go off to bed in the corral directly after supper; but on Sundays he considered himself the stranger within our gates, and was one of the family.

Poor Bill! he was quite a dude, and not content with washing before sitting at table, would produce, Heaven only knows from where, a small-tooth comb, and carefully sleek his damp locks over all the bald places on his scalp before coming in.

But he had one failing, a very dreadful one: he chewed—a thing I never allowed our own boys to do. When he was yarn-ing to us on Sunday, I saw him glance all round the room in search of an indispensable article of furniture I had not provided. I sat in terror, waiting for what might happen next, when suddenly Bill, with the air of a man who was not to be done, shifted his seat next to the wood box, and proceeded to use that as a spittoon. I did collapse then, and needless to say the wood box remained sacred to Bill during his stay with us. I could not say anything to him about it, he was so utterly unconscious of offending, and besides, had he not spent all Sunday afternoon nailing mosquito netting over the windows and filling all my wash-tubs for the next day? So I put up with his little habit and himself. There are worse people than Bill in the world. He had well-to-do friends, for he showed me letters from two of his brothers, one a doctor and the other in business at Chicago; but, as he had said, the old folk were gone and home broken up. Perhaps the well-to-do brothers looked but coldly on the returning prodigal, for by his own showing Bill had been something of a ne'er-do-well. On his departure he presented me with a remarkable collection of rattlesnakes' tails and a bit of silver ore, to "show my folk to hum," and said he would write from Montana. But we heard no more of him; perhaps he is settled up in his creek lot, or perhaps he

has joined the old father and mother of whom he seemed so fond.

The next visitor we had off the track was a gentleman of a very different kind. The boys had had a busy day branding, and after supper had gone to the town for flour. I, too, had been busy, and felt too tired to go with them, preferring bed after a hard day's washing and baking, for in summer time I usually lumped the two things together, so as to have as little fire going as possible. I had turned the lamp down low against the boys' return, and had just gone into my room, when I heard a loud knock at the door.

"Tramps," I exclaimed, not over pleased, and had the bolt been run, I should have been "not at home."

To my horror, when I opened the door, I saw a man in a white shirt, and knew I was face to face with a "dead beat," and the boys not in. He looked about from five-and-twenty to thirty, was got up regardless of expense, and his white shirt and nicely blacked shoes nearly took my breath away. He wore a black felt bowler instead of a cow-boy hat, and—had kid gloves on.

He informed me his name was Wilson. A friend of ours at a ranch ten miles off had sent him on to us, whilst I quickly told him in return—for the white shirt had filled me with misgiving—that my brothers were out, taking care to add that they would be back shortly. Upon this Mr. Wilson still further alarmed me by saying he had watched them off, and would wait till they returned.

After that I could only ask him in, and he made himself quite at home, talking to such an extent that I began to suspect him of indulging in too many "whiskies" at the last dépôt. Oh, how I wished I had kept even a dog behind, when I found myself all alone on the ranch with this "dead beat," and knew that the boys would not be back till midnight! There was a shooting-iron on the shelf behind his head certainly; but at that date my idea of the use of it was very crude. Still, it was a comfort to know it was there.

Meantime, my friend, whom I had discovered to be a fellow-countryman, poured out floods of eloquence, informing me, amongst other things, that his mother lived in Kensington, and that he had been, when last in England, electioneering for Lord Charles Beresford—nay, he even gave me one of his speeches, at the end of which he had so completely forgotten who

I was that he addressed me repeatedly as "My boy," and went on with this wretched claptrap till nearly eleven, I being dead asleep with sheer weariness by that time, but all my uneasiness having departed. I made some strong tea, which answered two purposes—did him good, and kept me awake. But I was thankful when the boys returned and I could go to bed.

Poor Wilson loafed round with us for a time, and then went on his way. Personally, he was pleasant enough; but the last time I saw him he was in custody of the city sheriff, having informed against the ranchman who had taken him in for train-wrecking, and a counter-charge having been taken out against himself for swindling, he having passed himself off as a lord at a neighbouring boarding-house at a health resort.

Next there came a trio composed of two Frenchmen and a dancing bear. This was quite a small excitement for us, and we let supper cool whilst we watched their antics. All they wanted for it was a meal and bed; but I chiefly remember them for the fact that, being the fall of the year, the boys, without thinking, gave the three a shake-down in one of the stables, with the result that no horse could be persuaded to enter it again for many a long day. They snorted, and roared, and bucked as they smelt the fine aroma of Master Bruin, and we paid dearly for his night's lodging. Then came the strangest sight of all—a woman and two children painfully making their way along the Santa Fé track, the first and last time I ever saw one of my own sex "counting the ties."

It had been a hot summer day in June, and all through the sultry noon I had nearly been half dead with heat; but with supper time came the cool, delicious breeze which blows over the snowy range every evening, and we began to revive again.

I had set the table out of doors, to get all the air we could. It had been far too hot to eat at dinner-time, but for supper I had cold beef and salad, a junket covered with cream waiting in the dairy, and a water-melon cooling in the bucket down the well; fresh bread and biscuit, cool, hard butter, and apple pie. I had done all my work, had a tub, and put on a clean calico gown, and felt that for the first time that day life was worth living; so I sat waiting for my boys to come in, placidly knitting as I sat on the wood pile. Then my eyes fell on the iron way of the Santa Fé track, glittering in the last rays of the

sun like bars of silver, and I rubbed them hard as I saw three people come slowly along it; for two of them were a woman and a child, the other a big lad of about eighteen. He walked ahead, the woman followed, carrying a bundle, and the little one followed, lagging behind, and taking off his shoe every now and again to empty out the sand.

I remember thinking at the time that the little boy's big brother might have carried him, but when they came down to beg for supper and shelter the big brother was nowhere to be seen. The poor woman had a piteous tale to tell of being burnt out, and wandering from place to place in search of work; but the eldest boy never turned up, although they had permission given to sleep in the barn. I think he was a little ashamed of begging, and his mother took some milk and food to him behind the scenes. They had their rugs with them, and went away after breakfast with many thanks for it, and some new shoes for the poor little mite of seven, whose feet were in a dreadful state. I am ashamed to say also that the woman was the richer by a two-dollar bill than when she came to the ranch; for when I inquired of my nearest neighbour about them, I was told to my horror that they had been up and down the track from Denver to Pueblo no less than four times, with a different tale for each ranch. I felt very small when she finished her speech with "Guess they concluded you were a tenderfoot, and real soft."

Yes, it was a fact, I had been taken in thoroughly; but after all, perhaps they hurt themselves more than they did me, although the story was a good joke against me for many a long day. But impostors or no, I never saw them gain, and however the two elder tramps might have deceived me, there was no doubt that the little boy was about tired out, and the meal and bed did him good, if no one else deserved it. And as for my two dollars, although at that time I had not too many to spare, still a dollar in the States goes about as far, usually speaking, as a shilling in the old country, and I fear I have many a time wasted a good deal more than a shilling.

We had many other tramps after that, one a gentleman who had been "fired" from a freight train and hurt his foot, whom we took in for a time; and another, a Chinese, whom I pressed into service as a domestic help. He, however, I sent off

very shortly, having, after a large wash, given "Johnny" the clothes to sprinkle before I folded them. Will it be believed when I tell the story of how he did it? I placed the clean clothes upon the kitchen table myself, and filled a basin with water, and told him what to do. Judge of my horror when Johnny lifted the basin to his lips, and filling his mouth with water, proceeded to sprinkle the clothes that way. No woman could stand that, particularly one who had done the wash herself, and I said, "Johnny, you walkee." And Johnny walked, with "a smile that was childlike and bland"; but alas, not alone — my ring walked away with him, and a five-dollar bill of my brothers'!

But I am thankful to say that after Johnny we had no more of the "heathen Chinee," so that my recollections of the gentlemen who "counted the ties" are for the most part pleasant ones, and my memory of the much-abused American tramp not disagreeable.

A FAMOUS PRINTING-HOUSE.

ENGLAND owes a deep debt of gratitude to William Caxton, her first working printer, and the indebtedness has been admitted unreservedly in a variety of ways. Historians and writers on literature wax eloquent over the clumsy presses which Caxton set up in the Almonry of Westminster; bibliomaniacs contend furiously at great book-sales for the few copies of his books that come into the market; while patient bibliographers, for the guidance of such buyers, describe in the minutest detail each leaf of every volume printed at the Westminster Press. But while due tribute and acknowledgement are thus rendered to Caxton, it should not be forgotten that in his time England was far behind many other European countries in culture and love of learning. The Almonry press, established in 1471, was as a light set in a dark place, and the light spread very slowly. In the course of the next thirty years only two more printing-presses were established in England—one at Oxford and one at St. Albans. It was far different on the Continent. By the end of the fifteenth century, presses were established in more than two hundred cities and towns of Europe, and of these no less than seventy-one were in Italy. Of the re-

mainder, fifty were in Germany, thirty-six in France, twenty-six in Spain, and fourteen in little Holland. Even in Switzerland there were seven towns that heard the rattle of the press; Belgium had the same number, while our poor English total of three was exactly matched by Denmark and by Portugal. It is worth noting that the tiny State of Montenegro was able to contribute one town to the list.

Italy was not only far ahead of other countries in the number of her presses, but she was able to put forth no mean claims to distinction on the ground of the quality of their work. For, prominent among the printing-houses of the peninsula was the famous Aldine Press, established at Venice in 1494, and carried on by several members of the house of Aldus till 1597, whose productions have always been dear to lovers of books as beautiful specimens of the typographical art, both in paper and print. The Aldine classics were long amongst the books most desired by collectors, and they were consequently costly, and not for every man's buying. Nowadays the fashion has changed, and other classes of books are more in demand. First editions of modern writers are more valued than the beautiful specimens of early printing which were dear to an earlier race of bibliophiles, and consequently many of the productions of the Aldine Press can be bought for a fraction of their former cost.

The founder of this great Venetian printing-house was Aldus Manutius, a native of Bassiano, near Velletri, who, as a young man, showed such zeal in the study of the Greek language and antiquities that he became known as the "Philhellénist." The project of the press at Venice sprang from his devotion to the ancient writers. Manuscripts were very scarce, and very few Greek books had as yet been printed. Aldus determined to do his best to improve matters. "Those who cultivate letters," he said, "must be supplied with books necessary for their purpose, and till this supply be obtained I shall not be at rest."

And nobly he carried out this great resolve. With the assistance of friends he established his press at Venice about 1494, choosing the Queen of the Adriatic as the scene of his labours, because of its constant correspondence with Greece, and because of the considerable degree of freedom of thought and political action which it then enjoyed. It is difficult to over-estimate

the debt that literature owes to the enterprise of Aldus. At the time when he went to Venice, the existing printing-houses published little but works on scholastic philosophy, jurisprudence, and mysticism. Greek types were so scarce that the printers often left blank spaces where passages from Attic authors occurred, and laboriously filled in the gaps with the pen before the book was issued. The claims of literature were practically ignored. Aldus followed a different policy. In pursuance of his determination to provide scholars with necessary books, he worked so hard and so earnestly that in little more than twenty years, he had enshrined for ever in the safety of print nearly every known Greek and Latin classic, besides many works in his native Italian.

His books were prepared with great labour. He thought no journey too hard or too long, no price too great to give, to secure a rare manuscript of an ancient writer.

On the preparation of the text he not only brought his own scholarship to bear, but founded an academy of learned men, from whom he constantly obtained help in the revision and interpretation of his authors. This academy had fixed days for meetings, which were held in the printer's house, when the members discussed what authors should be published, and which manuscripts and texts should be adopted. Aldus was also assisted by many refugees from Crete, who found, we are told, in his office another home. Erasmus himself is said to have occasionally assisted in the work of revision.

The first meeting between the great theologian and the great printer was rather curious. Erasmus was at Bologna, and wrote to Aldus that he would like him to print his "Adagia." Aldus at once replied, agreeing to undertake the book, and Erasmus came to Venice to see him. Being a stranger, and unknown to the people about the printing-house, the author of the "Adagia" was kept waiting a long time, for Aldus, thinking he was merely a casual visitor, or some bore of the town, did not hurry to see him. Presently the name of Erasmus dropped on Aldus's ear, and the printer, apprised of his mistake, ran to him and welcomed him with every sign of esteem and warm respect. As an intimation that the presence of mere idle callers and loungers was not desired, Aldus had inscribed in Latin over the door of his sanctum the following admonition: "Who-

ever you are, Aldus earnestly entreats you to despatch your business as soon as possible, and then depart, unless you come hither, like another Hercules, to lend him some friendly assistance, for here will be work sufficient to employ you, and as many as enter this place." The same inscription was used later for a similar purpose by one Oporinus, a learned printer of Basle.

Some six years after his establishment at Venice, Aldus thought out an improvement which went far towards revolutionising typography. This was the invention of the cursive or italic letters, which are said to have been copied exactly from the handwriting of Petrarch. By the use of these finer characters which, while more distinct than the old types, also took up considerably less space, a volume of small and handy size was made to contain the matter which had formerly filled an unwieldy folio. The superiority of handy octavos, from the point of view of readers and scholars, over ponderous quartos and folios need hardly be pointed out. The new type was called Aldine from its inventor, as well as italic; but the former name, natural and appropriate as it was, has unfortunately dropped out of use.

The first work printed in the new way was an octavo edition of Virgil, issued in 1501, a book which is now extremely rare. A defective copy sold not long ago for one hundred and forty-five pounds. There is a copy in the British Museum and another in Lord Spencer's magnificent library at Althorp; a library which, by the way, possesses no less than six hundred and ten of the works printed by the Aldine Press, including fifteen on vellum by the elder Aldus. The first Italian work in the new type was an edition of Petrarch, also published in 1501, and edited by Cardinal Bembo from an autograph manuscript of the poet—a fact which perhaps gave rise to the story that the italic letters were copied from Petrarch's own writing.

It was in the following year (1502) that Aldus first used the design, the well-known anchor around which a dolphin is entwined, with which he afterwards marked all his books. It was not original, for it occurs on medals of Vespasian and Domitian, but was well adapted to the printer's purpose; for, according to the usual explanation, the dolphin denoted swiftness in execution, and the anchor steadiness in conception, the whole being equivalent to the Horatian maxim "*festina lente*," hasten slowly.

Venice, at this period, enjoyed a larger measure of political and religious freedom than many of the neighbouring states, but still a printer had to be on his guard against publishing what might give offence to his superiors, more especially to the powers of the ecclesiastical world. In 1498, Aldus printed an edition of the works of Politian, but it is significant that an account of the conspiracy of the Pazzi, in which a pope appeared as accessory before the fact to murder, is omitted; the printer probably was afraid lest its publication might annoy the Court of Rome, and get himself into trouble. In the same year Aldus issued a catalogue of his publications—a work of great interest, for it contains the prices at which the books were issued, but only one copy of this catalogue, found in the French National Library, is known to exist.

Aldus was a man of inexhaustible energy, as well as of great learning. He took as good care of the outsides of his books as of the insides, and did much to develop the art of ornamental bookbinding. Jean Grolier, the famous amateur of bindings, was one of his friends, and had many of the Aldine books magnificently bound. In addition to the labours connected with his printing-press, of which some slight idea has been given, Aldus taught Greek, maintained an extensive correspondence with the literati of many countries, and wrote many valuable and interesting dedications and prefaces to the books that came from his press. Many of these prefaces are interesting not only on their own account, but also for the allusions which they often contain to the literary men and life of the time, and for occasional references to the details of the printer's business, which would otherwise have been lost. For instance, in the preface to the "*editio princeps*" of Euripides, published in 1503, Aldus mentions that he usually printed one thousand copies of his octavo editions, and in the preface to a Catullus of the preceding year, he professes to have printed as many as three thousand copies of that book. The numbers seem large for that period, and are significant of no small amount of intellectual life and interest.

Aldus also wrote a Latin grammar, which he published in 1507. This book was prompted by the recollection of his own early sufferings as a pupil under an ignorant dominie, who thought to teach him Latin grammar by making him learn

by heart a certain book by an Alessandro de Villadel, who flourished early in the thirteenth century, which professed to be a grammar, but was simply a string of doggerel verses in barbarous Latin. Aldus, in his youth, lost much precious time over this worthless book, and therefore endeavoured, by the publication of his own grammar, to spare other boys the same misfortune.

A sad interruption to the printer's beneficent work occurred in 1505. War was raging in the north of Italy, and Aldus was obliged to close his establishment and quit Venice. He travelled in many parts of the Continent, and did not return to Venice till 1507. On his way thither from Milan, he was arrested by soldiers of the Duke of Mantua, who took him for a spy, and he was imprisoned at Caneto. His incarceration did not last long, and his release was largely owing to the influence of one of his learned Milanese friends, the Vice-Chancellor of the Senate of that city. On his return to Venice he found his affairs in confusion, and himself threatened with poverty; but he reopened his printing-house, and endeavoured to re-establish his business. He was joined in the following year by Andrea Torresani, whose daughter he had married a few years before, and who brought some much-needed capital into the business. But a renewal of the war again closed the printing-house in 1509, and during the next two years no books whatever were published.

Aldus, however, was not easily daunted; he returned to his work in 1512, and in the following year printed a Plato with a noteworthy dedication by himself, addressed to the famous Pope Leo the Tenth. In this interesting address the printer shows that he well knew the value of his labours.

"Some learned men," he writes, "consider me indeed rather as a Hercules; because, unmindful of difficulties and dangers, I have rendered greater services to the cause of letters than any other person for many ages past. This has so far entitled me to their esteem that both in person and by letter they almost weary me with their commendations; sed non ego credulus illis; nor in truth have I ever yet published a book which has pleased myself. Such is the regard which I bear to literature, that I wish to render those books which are intended for the use of the learned, not only as correct, but as beautiful as possible. On this account,

if there be an error, although ever so trivial, occasioned by my own oversight or by that of those who assist me in the task of correction, although opere in magno fas est obrepere somnum, for these works are not the labour of a day, but of many years, without rest or intermission, yet so greatly do I regret these errors, that I would gladly expunge each of them at the expense of a piece of gold."

The Pope acknowledged his merits by a bull, dated November the twenty-eighth, 1513, in which, after alluding to his metal types as "so elegantly executed as to appear to be written with a pen," he proceeds to grant him the monopoly for fifteen years of reprinting and publishing all the classic writers whose works had already issued from his press, or which might thereafter be printed from the types of his own invention; he also grants him for the same period the exclusive use of his own invention, the cursive or italic type. In the same bull the Pope denounced heavy pecuniary penalties, and threatened sentence of excommunication, against all who should infringe these privileges; but at the same time advised Aldus to sell his books at a reasonable price, and wound up with an expression of confidence in the integrity and obedience of the printer.

But the days of the master were nearly numbered. Although he devoted himself to his business with much of his old energy, the interruptions to his work and consequent ruin to his fortunes had broken him down, and in 1515 he died, aged about sixty-seven, leaving his affairs in a very confused condition. It is not to the credit of Venice that no memorial was raised to her famous citizen until 1828, when a slab of marble was placed in the Church of Saint Augustine, bearing the following inscription:

Manucia gens erudita nem. ignota
Hoc loci arte typographica excelluit.

After the death of Aldus Manutius the printing business was carried on by his father-in-law, Andrea Torresani, assisted by his two sons, till 1529, when Andrea died. For four years thereafter business was at a standstill, owing to disputes between his sons and those of Aldus; but at last, in 1533, work was resumed under the direction of Paulus Manutius, the third son of Aldus, who was born in 1512. Paulus died in 1574, and was succeeded by his son Aldus, named after his grand-

father, who continued to own the printing business at Venice, but himself lived mostly at Rome, where he managed the Vatican Press. He died at Rome in 1597, aged fifty. The history of the printing-house during the reigns of the son and grandson of Aldus is of comparatively small importance. Neither Paulus Manutius, nor Aldus the younger, had the same qualifications as were possessed by the founder of the house; nor did they give the same unremitting attention to the texts of the books which they printed, and consequently the works issued by them are much inferior in point of correctness to those published by Aldus the elder.

The real interest of the house and its work died with its founder, to whose labours we owe, as a well-known scholar, Mr. Chancellor Christie, has truly observed, "a series of works which contributed more than those of any single printer or family of printers to the progress of learning and literature in Europe."

A DISTURBING ELEMENT.

A STORY IN SIX CHAPTERS.

By EVELYN FLETCHER.

CHAPTER I.

"It is a most extraordinary and preposterous proposition! I never contemplated such a contingency for a single instant!" said Aunt Deborah, who delighted in long words.

"Still, it's reasonable enough when one comes to think of it," said Aunt Joan coolly.

"Reasonable? Well, you astonish me! Why should this young man come here, when we have never so much as set eyes on him in our lives?"

"Where should this young man go, except to his own aunt's house?"

"He is no nephew of mine, thank heaven!"

"Thank heaven, he is my own sister's son!"

"Joan, I wonder at you! Small cause for thankfulness in your unfortunate relationship to that most vain and frivolous woman!"

"She had her faults, Deborah, like the rest of us, and she has long gone to answer for them, poor soul. But she was my

sister, for all that, and this boy is my nephew, and as such he will always be welcome in this house." And Aunt Joan folded her arms composedly across her ample chest, and looked at her half-sister with a quiet smile.

They were in striking contrast, those two old ladies, as they sat opposite each other at the breakfast-table on that fair May morning, discussing the letter which had descended like a bombshell into the midst of their tranquil life. Aunt Deborah was undoubtedly the prettier and more attractive-looking of the two. Though several years younger than her half-sister, her hair was snow-white, and contrasted well with her singularly youthful complexion and soft grey eyes. A prettier, daintier old lady it would be difficult to imagine than she appeared as she sat there in the bright morning light, her slight, almost girlish figure very erect and stately; for she always made the most of her height, knowing well that Nature had been somewhat niggardly to her in that respect. Aunt Deborah was not one of those foolish persons who take advantage of a youthful appearance to retain the dress and manners of long-lost youth; on the contrary, nothing could be more appropriate to her years than the richly-falling grey silks that she usually wore, with their delicate lace ruffles at wrist and throat, while her marvellous caps and scarves were the admiration and envy of every old lady within twenty miles of Ravensbourne. Her manner, too, was always extremely dignified, and characterised by a certain old-world stateliness which was not without its charm in these hurrying days of slang and slipshod free-and-easiness.

Very different was Aunt Joan. Her warmest admirers could never have dared to call her pretty in her best days, and they must have been over some half century ago. A grim, powerful face, darkly framed in hair as black as the wing of the raven whose name she bore; black, piercing eyes, that nothing ever escaped; a complexion dark as a gipsy's, and that seemed to have braved the storms of her sea coast home during more winters than fall to the lot of most of us; and a square, solidly-built frame, more remarkable for strength than gracefulness. Such was Aunt Joan, as she presided at the head of her breakfast-table that morning, and looked at her sister over the teapot with the quiet smile that meant so much. Nor was the peculiarity of her appearance at all lessened by

the clothes she wore. Aunt Joan scorned the conventionalities of fashion. In dressing herself she considered her own ease and comfort, but paid no heed to the æsthetic side of the question. Thus she wore a very short, skimpily-cut gown of some sombre woollen material, revealing a pair of particularly solid shoes, of a severely plain style of beauty. (Aunt Deborah's shoes were most dainty affairs, with bows, and buckles, and rich decorations in bead-work.) Across her broad shoulders she usually threw a substantial knitted shawl of some peculiarly dingy colour; and her hair, which she wore perfectly plain, was surmounted by a wonderful knitted helmet, somewhat resembling those manufactured under the auspices of the Mission to Deep Sea Fishermen.

Extraordinary as was the effect of this head-gear when drawn over the hair, it was far surpassed by that produced in moments of excitement, when Aunt Joan flung it back altogether and reared her smooth head, snake-like, from the coils of her encircling wool-work with a peculiarly alert and threatening gesture. At such times those who knew her best were apt to mind their manners and look out for squalls; and even Aunt Emmie, usually the least observant of mortals, appeared uncomfortable and anxious.

Aunt Emmie sat at the side of the table, and had hitherto taken no share in the conversation, partly by reason of her youth—she had barely seen sixty summers—and partly because she was surreptitiously engaged in committing to memory some sentimental verses out of one of those nicely got up "Keepsakes" that enjoyed such widespread popularity in the early years of the century. Aunt Emmie's was a round-eyed, round-faced sort of comeliness that wore well, and her hair, which was disposed in short ringlets under a small black lace bow, was of a pretty colour, and still very abundant. Aunt Emmie was youthful, and she knew it; but she knew, too, that she was only youthful by comparison, and, by the same rule, might become old at any moment, which was a knowledge that sobered her and kept her steady. Therefore, though young in heart, she was not overpoweringly young in manners; and though she often afforded her friends some amusement, she rarely incurred their derision.

Such were the three ladies who sat around the breakfast-table at Ravens-

bourne on the particularly bright May morning on which we make their acquaintance.

Aunt Deborah made no direct answer to Miss Raven's announcement that her nephew would always be welcome in her house, but she was not silenced for all that. On the contrary, she cast about in her mind for some indirect way of carrying on the wordy war, and hastened to attack one of the side issues suggested by her sister's remarks.

"Poor boy!" she said, with a gentle sigh. "I hope he will like our quiet ways and orderly life. You will find him rather a disturbing element, I fear."

"It will do us all good to be shaken up a bit; save us from growing old before our time, perhaps," said Aunt Joan briskly.

"For us there may be compensations." Aunt Deborah spoke as though she had grave doubts on the point; "but for your nephew—I imagine the poor youth sitting down to spend a quiet evening with us three elderly ladies! He will think he has broken into a nunnery."

"Then there will be a spice of romance in the adventure, and romance always has attractions for the young; ask Emmie, there."

"I doubt whether he would find much romance in a nunnery where the age of the youngest sister exceeded sixty," Aunt Emmie remarked. "We shall be poor companions for him, I fear."

"Then I will send for Maud to come and amuse him. She will be quite capable of it."

"Joan," and Aunt Deborah looked at her earnestly, "you do not yet know this young man. Do you think it wise to invite our niece to undertake his entertainment till you know that he is a fit associate for her?"

"Tut, tut; he is my nephew, I tell you. Maud is quite able to take care of herself, and I shall write to her before I am an hour older; so there, Deb."

And Aunt Joan bounced out of the room, smiling grimly. She knew if there were one thing that thoroughly annoyed her sister it was to be called Deb; it offended the pretty old lady's sense of the fitness of things, and justly so.

"Really, Joan has a very reckless way of taking people up," she said to her sister. "I hope she may not have reason to repent her credulity."

"I wonder how old he is!" the younger lady remarked.

Aunt Deborah looked displeased.

"Eddie, I wonder at you. What possible interest can you feel in this young man—and at your age, too?"

"He is Jane's nephew, and—mine."

"Don't be absurd; he is not our relation, and we are not going to acknowledge him. His mother was—oh, quite an impossible person."

"His aunt is the best friend we have ever had, Deborah. When you were left a widow, with an extremely small income, what would you have done if it had not been for her? What should I have done myself?"

"Oh, there is no occasion for you to excite yourself. I am not saying anything against Joan. She has many good points I am quite aware; and her father, I've always understood, was a most estimable man, and very wealthy. That person was only her half-sister, after all's said and done, and the father was—oh, quite different."

"And very poor! That was his worst offence, I expect. Deborah, it is wrong and ungenerous to make up our minds to disown Joan's nephew just because you didn't like his mother. That is the true reason after all."

"You are talking of things beyond your comprehension, my dear Eddie," Aunt Deborah said loftily.

"Quite, and I hope they will always remain so."

"You had better confine your attention to those things that lie within your experience."

"That would be very narrow-minded of me. We should live and learn, you know, Deborah."

Despite her round-eyed simplicity, Aunt Deborah sometimes found her younger sister a little difficult to understand. On such occasions she usually dropped the subject and took refuge in silence.

CHAPTER II.

It would, perhaps, be too much to say that Rupert Leigh had any keen anticipations of pleasure in the approaching meeting with his unknown aunt. He knew it had been his mother's wish that he should make her acquaintance if ever he should find himself in England, and he had written accordingly to propose a visit very shortly after his arrival.

Somewhat to his surprise, he had received a hearty response by return of

post; and this surprise was not untinged with dismay when he found that he was evidently expected to pay a visit of some weeks' duration. He certainly had not bargained for this, but he knew nothing of Aunt Joan's family circle, or the resources of the neighbourhood in which she lived, and he was, moreover, of a cheerful nature, and more prone to hope the best than fear the worst. So he wrote as promptly as the old lady herself; and the next afternoon saw his arrival at the little station, some two miles from Ravensbourne, where Aunt Joan's carriage was awaiting him.

It was a pretty drive over heath-clad hills, and through wooded valleys, with frequent glimpses of the sea from the higher ground, and that delicious freshness in the air that is never to be found far inland. The afternoon was beautiful with all the sunny beauty of May, and the sea sparkled and flashed in the strong flood of sunshine that poured down upon it, undimmed by even a passing cloud.

"There's Ravensbourne, sir," and the grey-haired coachman turned with the freedom of an old servant, and pointed with his whip to the opposite hillside; "the red roof over yonder."

"Ravensbourne is the name of the village, I suppose?" Rupert asked, shading his eyes from the sun.

"No, sir; it's just the house. Bourneley is the next village, so Miss Raven made up the name like when she came to live here."

"That was some time ago?"

"A matter of forty years, sir. She's done a deal to the place, too. I was in her service before she came here, and have seen the changes grow up, as I may say."

Then Aunt Joan must be a person of some importance. Somehow, Rupert had scarcely been prepared for this. Her well-appointed, albeit somewhat old-fashioned, carriage had been a surprise to him, for—though he could hardly have said why—he was certainly under the impression that his mother's half-sister was no richer than his mother had been, and that was very poor indeed. He began to feel a considerable increase of curiosity as he realised how very wide of the mark his preconceived theories had been, and tried to recall all he had heard of the old lady whose acquaintance he was about to make. After all, it was very little; his mother had rarely spoken of her own family, or

her early days, and beyond a vague impression that Aunt Joan would prove to be rather an original character, he had no ideas on the subject. Perhaps it was just as well.

At length the carriage turned in at the iron gates, and Rupert saw the picturesque old house, with its red roof and many gables, glowing ruddily in the afternoon sunshine.

He saw something else besides.

Aunt Joan was standing in the wide doorway all ready to receive him; her short black skirt raised above the stone step by half a foot at least, her helmet on her head, and a broad smile on her strong face. It was a spectacle the like of which Rupert had never seen before, and he held his breath for a moment as he looked at her.

Yes, Aunt Joan was an original character. His vague impression had been perfectly correct.

"My dear boy," she said, in a deep bass voice that made him jump, "I'm very glad to see you. Welcome to Ravensbourne. Saxton, how Jess is steaming. You have driven too fast. Oh, don't tell me. She's getting too fat, and you must be careful."

"She wants more exercise, ma'am; that's what Jess wants."

"See she has it, then. Now let's look at you, Rupert." She drew herself up in an easy attitude, her hands on her hips, her head thrown back. "Attention, sir; and don't laugh."

"I beg your pardon, Aunt Joan," he laughed, as he complied with her directions.

She nodded her head approvingly.

"Nicely brought up, I see. That's right. But I've one fault to find with you, nephew. You're too old."

"I'm very sorry, but——"

"So am I, for you can't mend it. Now, I was looking for a young fellow of five-and-twenty, or so; but you——"

"I'm nearer five-and-thirty. I'm really awfully sorry to disappoint you."

"I don't know that you disappoint me exactly," she retorted; "but your age does. Still, as I suppose it can't be helped, we must make the best of it. But come indoors, and make the acquaintance of the younger ladies of my family."

He followed her in amused silence across the wide hall into the drawing-room, where Aunt Deborah sat in state waiting to receive the objectionable nephew.

"Rupert, this is my sister, Mrs. Cranstone; your Aunt Deborah — by courtesy."

Aunt Joan's black eyes twinkled as she awaited the effect of this introduction. Though he might be five-and-thirty, her nephew was a singularly handsome man; and Aunt Deborah, despite her little airs and graces, was quite as impressionable as the rest of her sex.

"I hope Aunt Deborah will allow me the privilege?" Rupert said, with a chivalrous grace that became him well. This pretty old lady was an agreeable surprise, for until this moment he had never even heard of her existence.

"But it is a mere matter of courtesy, Mr. Leigh," she said, almost regretfully; "we are not really connected."

"That is my misfortune," he replied promptly. "I'm sure you would not wish me to suffer for it as though it were my fault?"

"But, Mr. Leigh——"

"Will you not call me Rupert, Aunt Deborah?"

She smiled, demurred, and at last consented.

Aunt Joan looked on, her arms folded, a grim smile on her firmly-cut lips.

"Where's Emmie?" she asked abruptly.

"In the garden, I suppose. See, here she comes."

"Rupert, your Aunt Emmie. Now you know all the old ladies. There will be another here to-morrow; but I think you'll find us enough for to-night, more especially if you reckon us by our united ages."

"We are all old enough to venture to say we are very glad to see you, Rupert," Aunt Emmie said pleasantly, as she shook hands with him. "You are quite an event in our quiet lives."

"Thank you. I hope I may prove a pleasant one."

"Emmie, will you show Rupert his room? You don't mind the stairs. I do."

"Certainly, Joan."

And she led the way upstairs accordingly, while Rupert followed, wondering a little what sort of time awaited him in the company of these three strangely contrasting old ladies.

"This is your room, and I'm sure I hope you'll be comfortable here;" and Aunt Emmie threw open a door and looked round the very pretty room with a severely critical air. "You must tell us, Rupert, if we have forgotten anything; but it is so

long since we have had any but lady visitors that very likely— However, you will ask for anything you want."

"I'm sure you've taken every care of me, even to those beautiful flowers," as his amused glance fell on a somewhat stiff bunch of hyacinths on the toilet-table. "Did you put them there, Aunt Emmie? That was very good of you."

"I thought, as you'd been out of England so long, you'd perhaps find them home-like, though, to be sure, they're not English flowers exactly," she said, colouring a little with gratification. "You've brought your own smoking things, I suppose?"

"Oh, but I shouldn't dream of smoking in here," he said hastily.

"But why not? We want you to make yourself at home, and Joan would be sorry that you should give up your usual habits. We know that you gentlemen are so dependent on your smoke."

"Still, I can exist without it for a few hours; and I assure you I rarely smoke in the house."

"As you please. Have the servants unstrapped your portmanteau? Ah, that is right. I will leave you, then." She was about to close the door when another idea occurred to her, and she paused for a moment to say: "Oh, by the way, Rupert, if you want any shaving-water or anything, please ring for Susan. You'll find her very attentive and obliging, I believe, though her memory— But there, you'll find that out for yourself; and you want to get rid of me, I'm sure, though you're too polite to say so."

"Now that is a base libel!" he laughed; but Aunt Emmie shook her head wisely and withdrew.

Left to himself, Rupert looked around with a smile at all the evidences of kindly

feminine care. They touched even while they amused him; and he felt that after all it was pleasant to be the object of so many little attentions, and the home-like feeling it gave him was agreeable enough for a time. After the wandering life he had led, the quiet, that in another mood might have oppressed him, seemed strangely restful and soothing; and as he looked from his window over the sloping lawns to the wooded valley and the distant hills, he felt glad he had come, and no longer feared that life beneath his aunt's roof would weary him too unendurably.

Yet the position was a novel one, and he could not but smile as he pictured himself making the fourth in this quiet and elderly party. It would be a new experience altogether, and he felt that he must be a strange and somewhat disturbing element in this house, where for so long a time none but lady visitors had been received.

A knock at the door disturbed his meditations. He opened it, and there stood Aunt Emmie, panting a little from the haste with which she had ascended the stairs.

"I forgot to tell you that we have afternoon tea at half-past four," she said apologetically. "Joan says of course you won't care for tea; but I thought perhaps after your journey—"

"I always drink tea when I can get it," he replied emphatically. "Aunt Joan is quite mistaken, and I'm very much obliged to you for telling me. I must just wash my hands, but I'll be down in a minute."

"I hope you'll like the soap," Aunt Emmie said, as she turned away. "I put you out brown Windsor. I always use it myself."

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MISS LATIMER OF BRYANS.

By ELEANOR C. PRICE.

Author of "Alecia," "Red Towers," "The Little One," etc.

CHAPTER XX. CHURCH CORNER.

ON a grey and rather melancholy afternoon, three days later, Mr. Farrant was sitting alone by his fireside, smiling to himself. He was very well satisfied with the way in which things were going on. He had done his duty in hinting to Geoffrey Thorne's father what he thought likely to happen. He hardly knew or cared whether that excellent country bumpkin, as he considered him, had quite taken in what he meant. The idea had suggested itself to his active brain on that very first day of the portrait-painting, when he only knew that Geoffrey came of a good stock, and was a manly fellow, with good manners and an honest face. As an artist he was no judge of him, except that no one could fail to understand the conscientious pains which were taken with Maggie's picture.

Maggie was the curious old man's one pride and one treasure. People said that he had neglected her; that she had had no proper education, and that she owed everything to Miss Latimer's kindness. This was in a great measure true. Mr. Farrant professed, however, to have no faith at all in the modern education of girls. There were the books, he said; the house was full of them. She could read, and that was enough. Perhaps it may not have been altogether a misfortune for Maggie that she found very little to amuse her in a library which contained a great deal to do her more harm than good. She

was not attracted by old brown bindings, and the long "s" of former centuries made a page look like Greek to her. Thus, till Poppy took her in hand, she had read hardly anything; but she made up for her ignorance by a very fair sharpness of wits.

There was something in her grandfather's system not entirely bad. Maggie would have been vulgarised by any school. Being kept at home, almost in solitary confinement, having no friends but Poppy in the village or the neighbourhood, a certain unconventional refinement seemed to belong to the girl. She was always well-dressed; her grandfather was generous in that way. He was ready to spoil her in some things, and to tyrannise over her in others. Sometimes he watched her with an odd sort of curiosity. She could hardly be said to come of a good stock—the child of his good-for-nothing son and a half French music-hall singer. What would her future be? Miss Latimer's friendship was all very well; her influence had been in the right direction. Such a training had many good consequences for Maggie; but Mr. Farrant was too clever to think that it would have the further effect of marrying her to a gentleman. Yet he was ambitious for Maggie. "None of your tradespeople or your clerk fellows for me." And now, seeing what a vast difference her friend's approaching marriage must make to Maggie's daily life, her grandfather thought seriously that she had better marry too.

He very naturally pounced on Geoffrey Thorne as the likeliest match he had seen yet. He liked him; he did not object to his profession. Not that he thought it likely to be a money-making one. But "the other old parson"—as

they used to call him at Bryans to distinguish him from his friend, the late Rector—though much inclined to be miserly, was not mercenary. He had told William Thorne that his grandchild would be "pretty well off." The fact was that, for a girl in her position, she would have a very good fortune. He made no outward show or talk of his riches, partly for fear of attracting fortune-hunters; this, too, was one of the reasons why he kept Maggie so carefully under lock and key. But, superior in this to many better men, he thought that Maggie's own fortune would be enough for her. He had long ago resolved to put nothing in the way of her marrying a poor man, if he liked that man's position and character.

With silent interest and amusement, from his great chair by the fire, Mr. Farrant had watched the progress of the little painting through the long course of Geoffrey Thorne's daily visits. He saw that every day the artist and his model were becoming more friendly, more intimate; that the young man's real admiration for the girl showed itself every day more plainly. The old giant himself was in a very mild mood. Geoffrey found himself always kindly treated, and welcome at any hour. Maggie was not snubbed for constantly quoting Mr. Thorne, whose Paris adventure made him something of a real hero.

At last the portrait was finished. Geoffrey had begun it over again, this time in profile, after the suggestion that came to him in church. It was both clever and pretty, soft in colouring, delicate in workmanship. No doubt it had many faults, and something of the exaggerations of a first attempt; but there was more true feeling in it than in any of Geoffrey's landscapes. He had taken it to Oxford to be framed, and had brought it back to-day. He was pleased at Maggie's pleasure, and at her grandfather's approval. It stood on the chair opposite to him; the flickering fire-light danced upon the face, and seemed to make it smile. With his own odd smile the old man looked up at the two young people as they stood and admired it.

"Well, Mr. Geoffrey," he said, "I grudge that to Miss Latimer, d'ye know. Now you may as well sit down and paint another for me."

Geoffrey looked dreamily at his first portrait. It had a certain fascination.

"A copy, do you mean?" he said. "It belongs to Miss Latimer; you must ask her leave."

"No, not a copy," said the old man. "None of your copies for me. Anybody could do that, even a photographer. No; I'll have another original, if you please. And I'll have rather more of her face, while you're about it. One can't have too much of a good thing, or of a pretty thing either."

Geoffrey smiled, and Maggie laughed out.

"Well, Mr. Farrant—I don't know—I'll see what I can do," he said quietly.

Then he began to make arrangements with Maggie about sending the picture that evening to the Court; and then he said he must go; he wanted to see Mr. Cantillon before he went home.

"Don't go round by the road, then," said Mr. Farrant, with more friendliness than he had ever shown before. "Take the key, Maggie, and let Mr. Thorne out at the lower garden door. That will take you to the Rector in three minutes."

Geoffrey thanked him. His manner was grave, and his eyes still lingered on the portrait. It seemed to attract him more than the smiling face and bright soft eyes of its original. Old Farrant still watched him with a pleased smile; his hawk-like visage for once looked amiable, and, most unlike him, he pressed Geoffrey's hand with a certain cordiality when he went away.

Maggie had taken down the key from the nail where it hung, though she knew that the door was probably unlocked. She threw on her garden hat, and a little shawl round her shoulders, and led the way through the window, and down the flight of quaint steps into the garden. Geoffrey followed her; they walked slowly down together over the damp grass of the lawn, past the long borders where a few autumn flowers were lingering under the ivy-covered wall; then between the yellow currant-bushes, along a little box-edged path, under a few old apple-trees, bent and grey, which grew in rough grass at the far end of the garden. Beyond them a row of tall shivery poplars divided the garden from the meadow and the stream. They grew just outside the wall, at the south-west corner of which was the door into the meadow. It had been the old short cut between Mr. Martin and his friend, when he gave up the Rectory and moved to the house on the other road, so much altered and improved by Mr. Cantillon since then.

As these two walked down the garden they talked of Poppy. To Maggie, the

artist's devoted admiration for her friend seemed a very natural and proper thing; and Geoffrey found a kind of peace in talking about her to this frank and loving girl who did not understand his real feelings in the least, and saw nothing strange in that spirit of worship which no engagement or marriage could or need drive away. So there was one subject which filled most of their moments alone together. These, indeed, were not very many, for no old dame could have watched a girl more closely than Mr. Farrant watched his grand-daughter.

He had been sitting alone for about five minutes, that afternoon, smiling to himself as he thought out his plans for Maggie, and squeezing up his eyes for a better view of her picture, when he was aware that somebody came up the steps from the garden to the window and tapped upon it gently. At first he thought it was Maggie in play, then looking up he saw that it was a taller woman than Maggie. He rose out of his chair, slowly and with difficulty, shading his eyes with his hand, for the visitor had her back to the light, and a ray of cold white sunshine had just broken through the clouds, so that her face was quite in shadow. Seeing the old man move she turned the handle of the window and let herself in. Tall, fair, quiet, with happy eyes, and a smile about her mouth which seemed to speak of some new and present pleasure, Poppy Latimer stepped into the room and came forward to Mr. Farrant.

"Don't let me disturb you," she said. "I knew I could open the window, so I ventured to come in this way."

"You're always welcome," he said, "come what way you will. It's not till by-and-by that we shall find the difference. But we're not going to be unreasonable. I asked my girl to-day when her young lady would be coming, and she gave me a piece of her mind, I assure you. She said Miss Latimer had come back with other fish to fry. Vulgar, wasn't it? But you've left a bit of the old Eve in Maggie."

Poppy coloured faintly.

"I hope you know that I can never change to my old friends—Maggie does, I think."

"You and Maggie know a lot more about human nature than I do, no doubt. Sit down, won't you, Miss Latimer? She'll be in soon—at least, if she is not we shall know the reason why. When a young

woman goes out with a young man there are rules of logic that come in useful."

He had let himself fall into his chair again, and sat with his two large thin hands spread out on the arms of it, his face raised, his white beard streaming, his queer, suspicious eyes fixed on the girl as she stood near him. An expression of eager interest rose and deepened in her face. Was it possible? Could her idea, her hope, be really on the way to be realised?

The fact was, that a few minutes before she had come into the garden at the opposite corner to the gate that led to the Rector's house. She had climbed the rough steps, after crossing the lane from the Court avenue, which were hardly ever used except by Maggie and herself. Coming along the grass under the apple-trees, she had seen Geoffrey and Maggie as they walked slowly down the path between the currant-bushes. By hurrying a little she would have met them, but she did not wish to do this. She saw them disappear beyond the garden, going towards the door in the corner. Then she waited a little in the shadow of a hedge, thinking that Maggie would be back in a minute or two, for she had at once guessed what took her down with Geoffrey to the door. But Maggie did not come; and then it suddenly occurred to Poppy that what she wished more than most things might be on its way to happen. A sort of shyness made her feel that she would rather not wait for Maggie in the garden. She would go in and see Mr. Farrant, as she often did, though this was the first time since she had come home.

As the old man looked at Poppy he forgot his own affairs for a moment, and remembered his manners and his duty.

"I haven't seen you since I heard that news about you, Miss Latimer," he said. "Well, look here, the world is queerly governed, I sometimes think. The people who deserve the biggest share of what's called happiness don't always get it, you know. But if justice really does exist, as some people say, why, then your future must be safe enough. For nobody ever deserved more than you do, Maggie and I know that. Send him to us for your character."

"I hoped I should have your good wishes, Mr. Farrant," Poppy answered gently. "But if a character is to be fair it ought to come from somebody less kind, less prejudiced, than either you or Maggie."

"When it is asked for you can consider about that. As for Maggie, she is ready to give Captain Nugent a character too, just from seeing his photograph. But I don't take all that sort of thing literally, you know. No man could be good enough for a woman like you—I tell her so, and she hardly dares contradict me. He'll disappoint you in a thousand ways, my dear. Forgive him as long as you can."

"But you know nothing about him." Poppy's soft eyes flashed, and there was a shade of anger in the colour that suddenly tinged her fair face. Instantly, however, her natural sweetness conquered and she began to smile. "I will tell you nothing," she said. "But I will bring him to see you. And now—Maggie told me her picture was finished."

"There it is," said the old man.

Poppy gazed at the portrait with deep and pleased surprise. Though she was not imaginative, and knew nothing really of art, it seemed to her that Geoffrey had caught that something which every painter ought to catch, not so much the actual but the ideal look of his subject. He had given Maggie a sweet thoughtfulness which was often suggested, but never quite expressed, by her lovely eyes and laughing young mouth. He had given her the refinement which ought to have belonged really to features and tints like hers, but which, in fact, was only occasional and skin-deep. The whole face and air was more delicate than in life, the nose and mouth had finer lines, the dark hair curled more softly, the shape and turn of the head were gentler, more distinguished.

"My little girl looks like a lady," said Mr. Farrant with a short laugh. "But it's Maggie herself, all the same. What do you think of it, Miss Latimer?"

"I think it is charming. I like it very, very much. And do you know—don't tell him—from seeing Mr. Thorne's other drawings, it seems to me a great deal better than one would have expected."

"Does it? Ah, well, I have not seen the others. He promised to bring over a portfolio of sketches one of these days. But as to this—I'm glad you're satisfied. I tell him he must paint another for me, and give me a little more of her pretty face. He don't say no—I believe the young gentleman liked his task. Perhaps it isn't often that an artist gets such a model for nothing."

"The picture looks as if he had liked

painting it," said Poppy, after a minute's silence.

There was a slight sound at the window, and she looked up, thinking that Maggie was coming in. But it was only that a little wind, rising as the afternoon waned, suddenly swung a stray rose-branch against the casement.

"I suppose you don't know much of the fellow?" said old Farrant with one of his queer, keen looks.

"I think I know him pretty well," Poppy answered, her eyes returning to the portrait. "I like him very much."

"Will he ever make a name as a painter?"

"I don't know," Poppy said honestly. "If hard work and real love of his art can do anything, he ought to succeed. He has done a good deal abroad, but I want him to try some English landscape-painting. And really—now that I see this—I think it might be worth while for him to take up portraits. I don't understand much about it, but he certainly can catch a likeness."

"And improve upon it, which people naturally like," said the old man.

"Oh, I don't think so," Poppy murmured thoughtfully.

"Miss Latimer," he went on, with an odd abruptness, "your marriage will affect Maggie more than any one except yourself. Not intentionally on your part. You will mean everything to go on the same. But it won't. In the nature of things it can't. She hardly understands herself the difference it will make to her. You have treated her, I may say, as your own younger sister. You can't treat her like that any more."

"Why not?" said Poppy, under her breath; but she hardly lifted her eyes, for something told her that he was right. It could not be quite the same.

"And you know what you have done for her," the harsh old voice went croaking on. "You have lifted her out of her own station. She won't care now to make friends with her own natural equals. What is to be done with her? What am I to do? I've backed you up as far as I could. I've kept her wrapped in cotton wool, chiefly to please you. And now, ever since Mr. Cantillon came in one day and told us that you were engaged to be married, I have sat here in my chair wondering and worrying, bothering my old brains till they ache, to know what I am to do with Maggie. There she is, as you and I have

made her—a pretty girl, a good girl, as far as I know, clever, but yet helpless. She loses you; she won't have me long. She is left alone in the world without a relation—at least, if she has any, they are not fit to come near her. Miss Latimer, listen." He bent forward, speaking in a hoarse whisper; his eyes gleamed, his beard wagged with excitement. "There's only one thing. She must marry. Tell me—you know the fellow and all his forbears—shall she marry Geoffrey Thorne?"

For a minute Poppy remained silent under the old man's eager, questioning eyes. Her thoughts were bent on Maggie and Geoffrey themselves. Being by no means a hardened match-maker, she scarcely wished to commit herself by a positive answer to such a very direct question. That they liked each other she felt tolerably sure. There had been encouragement in the sight of them just now, as they passed down the garden together, absorbed in talk.

But the past few weeks had cleared up Poppy's ideas a good deal on some subjects. They had made her very certain—odd, if she had known the history of her own engagement—that people should be left quite free in arranging their own lives, in falling in love with each other. Love should come straight from heaven, Poppy thought, like Arthur's and her own. To marry without love seemed now a supreme impossibility. These things could no longer be looked at in a matter-of-fact way. Her wish was still the same—it had never varied since Herzheim and Aunt Fanny's first suggestion—that her two friends might marry. She had not been afraid, on behalf of her wish, to use her power over Geoffrey Thorne to prevent him from going to Spain. She was quite ready to encourage Maggie in talking about him and admiring him. But something in the tone of old Mr. Farrant's question, and the look of his keen eyes and resolute face, suggested tyranny. It seemed as if he only waited for Poppy's consent to force on a marriage instantly between the artist and his grand-daughter.

It was necessary, however, to answer his question; and another question seemed the best way out of the difficulty.

"Have you any reason—do you think," said Poppy, with some embarrassment, "that they care for each other at all?"

"She likes him. She talks about nobody else, except you," said the old man with his queer smile. "I have seen no nonsense,

if you mean that. He is a solemn sort of fellow—I don't know what he may have in his head. But he admires Maggie, that is plain, and it would be a good speculation for him. I gave his father a hint one day, but I don't know if he took in what I meant; he's a dull man, William Thorne. He's not over rich—farming don't pay; and that eldest son is an extravagant beggar, they tell me, wastes money on horses, and rubbish of that kind. There won't be too much for our friend. If he marries Maggie I'll make them a good allowance while I live, and she comes in for something when I die. They can live here with me, and he can run about and paint as he pleases, or sit at home and paint his wife. There, Miss Latimer! Do you like these notions of mine?"

"I like them very much," said Poppy. "I should be most glad to see Maggie happily married, and I have the highest opinion of Mr. Thorne. Only——"

"Only!" he repeated as she paused. "The only thing wanted, as it seems to me, is that some friend should wake the young man up—open his eyes to the situation. He has been staring at Maggie for more than three weeks now. He knows her face by heart, any way."

He lifted his eyes to the clock.

"More than half an hour since she went out! On my honour, it takes a long time to unlock the garden door. Perhaps she will have something to tell us when she comes in."

"Here she is," said Poppy in a low tone.

Maggie climbed slowly and lightly up the steps, pushed open the window, and came in. She stood, a lovely picture, framed by the stone mullions with their border of stained glass. Her round hat was set a little back on her dark, curly head, her cheeks were more flushed than usual, her eyes had the strangest brightness. She stood staring at Poppy in a sort of bewilderment.

"You are here!" she said.

Both Poppy and her grandfather, looking at her, felt that those chance words must be true, and that the farewell at the garden gate, spread over so long a time, must have left her with something to tell them.

"Well, my lass, what is it?" growled the old man, smiling. "Did you never see Miss Latimer before?"

Maggie shrugged her shoulders impatiently.

"How did you come? How can I have missed you?" she exclaimed. "But now go home as quickly as you can. Dear Poppy, go home. You are wanted. I have just seen somebody who wants you."

Her colour deepening, she darted across the room and disappeared through the door.

"What can she mean?" said Poppy, utterly bewildered in her turn.

"She's lost her wits," said Mr. Farrant. "No—it is as we thought, Miss Latimer. She has sent him up to the Court to ask your consent."

"He need not do that."

Poppy lingered a moment, and took one or two rather absent turns between the fireplace and the window. Then she wished the old man good-bye, and followed Maggie out through the door. She went to the girl's own sitting-room, but she was not there. After waiting a few moments Poppy thought that she might as well go home. Some explanation of Maggie's mysterious manner and words was evidently waiting for her there. She let herself out at the ponderous door, and turned down the green lane that led by her own woodland path to the avenue.

THE POETS OF THE PULPIT.

IN TWO PARTS. PART II.

DR. THOMAS PERCY, Bishop of Dromore, has no place in these pages as a poet, but as the cause of poetry in others by his "Reliques of Ancient English Poetry," which came as an inspiration to many young minds in an age of artificiality. I do not feel inclined to pass him over. Sir Walter Scott said that he had read no book "half so frequently or with half the enthusiasm"; and others have responded eagerly to the trumpet notes of those old ballads. A few years before its publication, a Scotch Presbyterian parson—the Rev. John Horne, minister of Athelstaneford, in East Lothian—had produced, at Edinburgh, his play of "Douglas," not wanting in the heroic sentiment, but wholly deficient in the dramatic spirit. It is said that on the night of its production, a perfervid Scot, at the close of the performance, triumphantly exclaimed: "Whaur's your Wullie Shakespeare noo?" Posterity has replied with sufficient distinctness. Horne, by the way, offended the rigid

conscience of the "unco gild," and, to avoid ecclesiastical censure, resigned his living and subsided into a layman.

Blacklock, Scotland's blind poet, an accomplished scholar but an indifferent versifier, took orders and became a D.D., though his blindness unfitted him for a pastoral charge. If the world must needs show its indifference to his verses, it owes him a debt of gratitude for the kindly help he gave to Burns in a dark hour of his fortunes. It was Blacklock who invited him to Edinburgh, introduced him to friends at the University, and assisted him to publish his poems by subscription.

The Rev. William Crowe, who, born the son of a Winchester carpenter, made such good use of his moderate abilities that he died rector of Alton Baines—the rectory afterwards held by Augustus Hare, one of the authors of "Guesses at Truth"—is mainly entitled to a place in our record by his topographical poem of "Lewesdon Hill," written in rhetorical blank verse, and published in the natal year of the Rev. James Grahame, a Scottish pulpit-poet, best known by his sympathetic poem of "The Sabbath." Grahame took orders in the Church of England, but never held higher preferment than a country curacy. His poetical work is little read now, except, perhaps, north of the Tweed.

Crabbe had risen into renown as a powerful and faithful painter of village scenes and village life long before Grahame endeavoured to climb "the Parnassian hill." "The Library" was published in 1781—twenty years before the appearance of "The Sabbath"—"The Village" in 1783. Then comes "The Parish Register," in 1807; and in 1812 "The Tales in Verse," which exhibit the peculiarities of his genius in the most vivid light. His clerical career was marked by several upward stages—curate of Aldborough, chaplain to the Duke of Rutland, curate of Strathern, rector of Trowbridge. His poetry nowadays enjoys only a modified popularity; that is, all men speak well of it and few read it. Yet no one has ever recorded with greater truth and power "the short, the simple annals of the poor," or presented the tragedies of humble life with more dramatic effect. As a minute observer and painter of Nature, no one of our poets has ever equalled him in sincerity; but his brush has none of that "purpureum lumen" with which Tennyson invests his landscapes. His command of pathos is not less extraordinary, and at

times a sense of humour makes itself legitimately felt.

Another pulpit-poet of celebrity in the days of our fathers, was the Rev. William Lisle Bowles. He is still remembered by some pensive sonnets, and by the reflex light which comes from his association with Coleridge, who kindled his lamp at Bowles's small but clear-burning taper. In his "Biographia Literaria," he records how that, at seventeen, when involved in the perplexities of metaphysics and theological controversy, and disgusted with the artificial methods of the school of Pope, he came upon Bowles's early sonnets, and was refreshed as by a breath of pure air. They did his heart more good, he elsewhere writes, than all the other books he ever read, excepting his Bible. Bowles published his sonnets when he was only twenty-seven. He lived to be more than eighty-eight, and in the three-score years between wrote a good deal of verse by which no living being ever profited; yet he might reasonably feel that he had not wasted his life, since he had lighted up the fire of Coleridge's genius. His sonnets are mellifluous, gently sad, and gracefully written. In his other poems may be felt the sentiment of calm and cultured amenity which seems naturally to belong to an English rectory. Bowles held that of Burnhill, in Wiltshire, which had also been held by George Herbert and Norris of Bemerton.

It is enough to say of the Irish curate, the Rev. Charles Wolfe, that he wrote two immortal lyrics—on the death of Sir John Moore, and the stanzas to Mary, beginning, "If I had thought thou couldst have died;" of good Bishop Heber, that his "Palestine" is one of the few prize-poems which have gained the public ear, and that with his hymns most Christians are familiar; and of the Rev. Robert Montgomery, that he wrote epics on Biblical subjects. Few, perhaps, remember Dean Milman as the author of "Fazio," a tragedy which, in its time, made a little noise in the world, and is still occasionally dragged from its sepulchral repose by indecorous hands; of "The Fall of Jerusalem"; of the "Martyr of Antioch," which Sir Arthur Sullivan has set to music. But the cold stateliness of their versification seems entirely appropriate to a dignitary of the Church of England.

There is something of the same frigidity in the voluminous verse of the Rev. Dr. Croly, Rector of St. Stephen's, Walbrook, who displayed a versatility of talent, how-

ever, not common on the part of an English clergyman in these conventional days. He wrote a comedy which was tragic, and a tragedy which was comic; a satire, polemics, history and biography, several poetical works of quite an ambitious character, and two romances—"Salathiel" and "Marston"—which are characterised by both originality and power. The former was a skilful handling of the legend of the Wandering Jew; the latter dealt with contemporary politics, and at first appeared anonymously in "Blackwood's Magazine." Dr. Croly was also an effective preacher, so that he may be cited as a favourable type of the Anglican school of divines, to which Kingsley afterwards brought the lustre of his many-sided genius. For Kingsley, like Croly, wrote history and biography, and the belles lettres, a tragedy—it is true that he never tried his hand at comedy—polemics, sermons, novels, poems. But there were aspects of his intellectual agility of which Croly's mind knew nothing. He was an enthusiastic social reformer and a devoted student of natural science, while, as a poet, as a novelist, as a historian, he rose beyond all comparison with his prototype. Croly is already forgotten, and Libitina has made a holocaust of his verses. But some of Kingsley's lyrics have become part and parcel of our literature, and will live with it; and much of his powerful, eloquent, clear, and nervous prose will also live.

From Croly to Charles Kingsley, from the Rector of St. Stephen's, Walbrook, to the Rector of Eversley, is too long a leap. I must go back a little to acknowledge the excellent qualities of the Rev. Frederick Faber's devotional poetry, and to note the enduring popularity of the Rev. John Keble's "The Christian Year," published in 1827, probably finds more readers now than even in the first flush of its fame, but I think there is more of the poet's "vivida vis" in the "Lyra Innocentium," which is much less widely known. Of both it may be said that they could have been written only by a poet who was also an Anglican priest. They belong, like George Herbert's "Temple," to the Church of England; her spirit interpenetrates them, they breathe her atmosphere of serenity, moderation, gravity, and subdued devotional fervour.

I wonder how many of my readers have dipped into the depths of "Attila," an epic poem founded on the Christian epoch which followed the Northern warrior's failure to raise a new Paganism on the wreck of

Rome's shattered power. It was written by the Hon. and Very Rev. William Herbert, Dean of Manchester, who began his career as a lawyer, then entered the House of Commons, and finally, took orders and subsided into the bosom of the Church. He, too, may be put forward as an example of the later clerical versatility, for he wrote not only epic poems, but sermons, and tales, and treatises of natural history.

Probably the best translation of Dante, all things considered, is still that of the Rev. Henry Francis Cary. Graceful and tender are the ballads and verses of the Rev. John Moultrie, Rector of Rugby, who at Eton had been the contemporary of Præd, Macaulay, and other brilliant young men, and had held his own among them. To a higher rank I must elevate that thoughtful and scholarly poet, the late Archbishop Trench, who was also a philologist, a historian, an essayist, and a theologian.

Looking back over this rapid record I observe two or three omissions. I have said nothing about the Rev. John Bramston, author of a satirical poem on "Taste"; John Logan, who wrote the beautiful poem on "The Cuckoo"; the brothers, Dr. Joseph and Dr. Thomas Warton, the latter of whom wrote the "History of English Poetry"; Dean Alford, another of our versatile Anglicans, whose claims to recognition as a poet are, however, of the weakest; and the late Cardinal Newman, whose "Dream of Gerontius," and one or two of whose hymns, will probably commend themselves to posterity.

Among the Continental poets we shall find many who wore cowl and hood or preacher's gown. Bishop Fingo, of Funen, for instance, bears an honoured name in Denmark, and has been called "The Danish Dr. Watts"—a designation not suggestive of a very high rank in the poetic hierarchy. Poets, like the stars, differ from one another in glory, and a Dr. Watts and a Bishop Fingo may do good service in their way. The greatest of the Swedish bards, Esaias Tegnir, was Bishop of Wixjö; a man of rare and active imagination, his name will live in virtue of his "Frithiof's Saga," and his "Battvardsbarnen," or "Children of the Lord's Supper," which Longfellow has translated. The earliest of the pulpit-poets of Germany seems to have been Ulrich Bonn, a "Knight of God," or preaching monk, whose "Edel-

stein," or collection of fables, has several times been republished. By several psalms and hymns, which sound like martial airs, Martin Luther claims kinship with the sons of song. The most eccentric of German popular preachers—a kind of Rowland Hill plus Spurgeon—Abraham a Sancta Clara (Ulrich Meyerle), trifled in verse, and produced at least one successful effort, his version of St. Anthony's Sermon to the Fishes, of which the last two stanzas run :

The sermon once ended, each turned and descended ;
The pikes went on stealing, the eels went on eeling.
Much delighted were they,
But preferred the old way.

The crabs are backsliders, the stock-fish thick-siders,
The carps are sharp-set. All the sermon forget !
Much delighted were they,
But preferred the old way.

Elias Anne Borger, the Dutch theologian, is not wholly unknown as a poet. Jean Bertaut, Bishop of Jiez, sang the sweetest and saddest of love-songs, which, says Mademoiselle de Scudéri, give a high and beautiful idea of the ladies he loved. Pietro Bembo, an able scholar and an elegant writer, wrote "Le Rime," a collection of sonnets and canzonettes which show much refinement of taste. Paul the Third bestowed upon him a Cardinal's hat, and afterwards preferred him, first to the Bishopric of Gubbio, and afterwards to that of Bergamo. Few of his ecclesiastical contemporaries more fully justified his good fortune. Tolomei, Bishop of Cerzola, had little of the preacher about him, and not much of the poet. He is best remembered by the part he took in the controversy between the critics whether the language should be called the Italian, or the Tuscan, or the Vulgar. He wanted to reform the alphabet by the introduction of several new characters; and another of his "fads" was the application of the old metrical forms to the Italian. The "Rime" of Giovanni Della Casa are characterised by an exceptional vigour of expression and boldness of imagination. He died Archbishop of Benevento. Cardinal Bentivoglio, in his lettered leisure, amused himself with writing sonnets and translating the "Thebais" of Statius into Italian verse. He might have done worse—and better.

Among the poets of Spain very few have belonged to the cell, the cloister, or the pulpit. The earliest was Gonzalo de Berceo, a monk of St. Millan's, in Calahorra, who sang the lives of the saints, the mysteries of the faith, and the miracles of

the Virgin, in more than thirteen thousand crabbed Alexandrines. The only good they ever did, I suspect, was to keep their author out of mischief.

Fernando de Herrera, surnamed the Divine, was, I believe, an Andalusian priest. As a lyrist he is highly esteemed; and his Odes on the Battle of Lepanto and the death of King Sebastian of Portugal, have in them a note of the true lyrical music.

The chief sacred poet of Spain is, I suppose, Luis Ponce de Leon, who, at the early age of sixteen, made his theological profession in the Augustinian order at Salamanca. In the seclusion of the cloister he devoted himself to moral and religious contemplation and the study of poetry. His devotional poems, composed in his early manhood, are described by Hallam as full of that soft mysticism which allies itself so well to the emotions of a poetical mind. One of his odes, "De la Vida del Cielo," is a really noble lyric, which, in its peculiar line of devout aspiration, has not been surpassed.

"At an early age," says Bouterwek, "he became intimately acquainted with the odes of Horace, and the elegance and purity of style which distinguish those compositions made a deep impression on his imagination. Classical simplicity and dignity were the models constantly present to his creative fancy. . . . His odes have, however, a character totally different from those of Horace, though the sententious air which marks the style of both authors imparts to them a deceptive resemblance. The religious austerity of Luis de Leon's life was not to be reconciled with the epicurism of the Latin poet; but notwithstanding this very different disposition of the mind, it is not surprising that they should have adopted the same form of poetic expression, for each possessed a fine imagination, subordinate to the control of a sound understanding."

For translating "The Song of Solomon," at a time when all translations from the Bible were forbidden, he was imprisoned for nearly five years in a dungeon of the Inquisition. When released, he immediately resumed his duties as Professor of Theology as if nothing had occurred to interrupt them, and began his address to a crowded audience with the words: "We were saying yesterday——"

There is an admirable criticism on Ponce de Leon in the fortieth volume of the "Edinburgh Review." Hallam refers with

approval to translations from this writer in the poems of Russell, but they are no longer accessible.

Calderon de la Barca, the greatest of the dramatic poets of Spain, who, like Marlowe and Goethe, has effectively handled the Faust legend—in his "El Magico Prodigioso"—and, in many of his one hundred and twenty dramas, has touched a high standard of poetical excellence, is tolerably well known to English readers. His earlier life was spent in the profession of arms, but at the age of fifty he took holy orders, and thereby earned a place among our poets of the pulpit.

Of the later Spanish bards, I believe the only ecclesiastic was José Iglesias de la Casa.

In concluding this catalogue of clerical singers, I am led to observe that the Church has not given us a single poet of the first class—owing, perhaps, to the limitations which she necessarily imposes upon those who take up her orders. It is noticeable also that our pulpit-poets have almost always adopted the didactic strain—a fact which has doubtlessly proved injurious to their popularity; for if the faithful laity are content to listen to sermons from the pulpit, they are inclined to resent them when repeated from the poet's study. Obviously it is unfair that the same man should enjoy the privilege of preaching at us under two different aspects!

HIDDEN TREASURE.

THERE is no subject more fascinating than the search for hidden treasure, and it is one which commends itself beyond the merely occult and mysterious, by a certain reasonableness, which appeals to common sense as well as to the imagination. For doubtless there is a great deal of hidden treasure in the world still remaining to be discovered, while we may infer that a vast deal has been actually found and appropriated to the uses of its fortunate discoverers. The old fable of the dying man who so heartlessly deceived his children by the story of the treasure buried in his garden, shows, anyhow, that such deposits were not uncommon in the remote era of the fabulist; and, indeed, the buried treasure forms a valuable item in the stock properties of the dramatist, the fabulist, and the story-teller from the very infancy of their arts. The classic dramatists did not fail to make use of such a convenient

expedient as the discovery of buried treasure, which was in itself an incident not altogether beyond the lines of possibility. Recorded instances, indeed, of such good fortune must necessarily be rare, as the prudent treasure-finder, then as now, must have been especially careful to keep his secret to himself. But occasionally such an incident glides into history, as in the case of Julius, the father of Herodes Atticus, who discovered an immense treasure buried under an old house, the last remains of his patrimony. The vastness of the treasure precluded any attempt to conceal its existence, and the prudent Julius hastened to make known his find to the officials of the Roman Empire.

"According to the rigour of the law," writes Gibbon, "the Emperor might have asserted his claim, but the equitable Nerva refused to accept any part of it."

So much delicacy of feeling is not to be discovered among our English Kings, from William the Conqueror downwards. Was it not because one of his vassals in Normandy had found a treasure and refused to share it with his duke that Richard Cœur de Lion laid siege to his castle, and lost his life in the fracas? Probably the recalcitrant baron was in the right, for the Costumier of Normandy does not award such treasure to the duke of that ilk, but to the finder, which appears altogether more reasonable. And the English law on treasure-trove bears the cachet of the strong mailed hand, and of

The good old rule and simple plan,
That those shall take who have the power,
And those shall keep who can.

For treasure-trove, according to the authorities on English common law—that is, money, coin, gold and silver plate, or bullion—all belongs to the Crown. Only gold and silver is treasure, so that if one finds antique bronzes, an old Roman sword, a Celtic battle-axe, or any trifle of that nature, he may keep it without fear of incurring the penalties attached to concealment of treasure. And such penalties are still in existence. Formerly the punishment was no less than death, now it is only fine and imprisonment. Although it may be doubted whether any jury could be found to convict of such an offence, which most people would confess to be capable of themselves committing should the occasion happily arise.

The treasure must have been hidden, not casually lost, to fall under the descrip-

tion of treasure-trove. "It is every subject's part, as soon as he has found any treasure in the earth, to make it known to the coroner of the county," says Britton, cap. 17. But if the subject should chance to find it upon the surface of the ground, or upon the sea, he may keep it without troubling the coroner, subject, that is, to any rights of a former possessor. According to a statute of the fourth year of the reign of Edward the First, "Coroners ought to enquire of treasure-trove being certified thereof by the King's Bailiffs and others, and of who were the finders." Seizures of treasure-trove may be enquired of in the Sheriff's torn. Nor are these antiquated laws altogether obsolete; as the other day an inquest was held at Hampstead upon some ancient silver plate accidentally discovered upon Parliament Hill, and which was formally adjudged to be treasure-trove and the property of the Crown. But it seems that under a recent statute the Treasury is empowered to grant to the finders of the treasure a sum equivalent to the bullion value of the find.

But although our old legisls successfully established the rights of the Crown to treasure-trove, yet such rights may have been acquired by charter or prescription by the lord of the manor in which the treasure is found. Thus a further distraction would be occasioned in the mind of the unlucky finder, who in his bewilderment as to whether he should seek out the coroner or run to the lord of the manor, might be tempted to settle the difficulty by keeping the treasure himself. Yet in this latter case the lot of the treasure finder was not always a happy one, as may appear from the following instance.

Early in the present century two brothers of the peasant class were labouring in the fields when their tools struck against a metallic substance, which proved to be a massive chain many pounds in weight, which they took to be of brass, and carried away with them, thinking that it might be useful as a plough chain. On reaching their humble cottage the weight and lustre of the metal aroused their attention. A link of the chain was detached and taken to the nearest town, was tested, and proved to be fine gold. The fortunes of the men were assured could they have kept their own counsel, but boasting of their prospects, and spending money lavishly on the strength of them,

curiosity and suspicion was aroused. Wives and children chattered about the wonderful find, and at last the officers of the Crown descended upon the scene; the treasure, which proved to be worth several thousand pounds, was snatched from its finders, who, for all result of their "good fortune," were awarded a term of imprisonment at the following assizes.

But it may be some encouragement to treasure seekers, if any such there be in these enlightened days, to know that the laws of treasure-trove only apply to such as is discovered by accident. Treasure discovered by systematic search would not come within this description, neither would finds discovered by astrological or cabalistic science, or by the potent influence of the divining rod. Of the wielders of the divining rod there are still many surviving specimens, who in many cases claim a kind of hereditary gift in the use of the hazel twig, but they are not generally in a position which suggests much acquaintance with treasure, buried or otherwise, and their services are chiefly sought by well-sinkers and others seeking for subterranean springs, for the discovery of which the divining rod is equally efficacious. Yet many old miners and metal seekers, and people who ought to know something about the matter, have considerable faith in the divining rod for the discovery of veins of ore and metallic treasures generally. Judging by results the old-fashioned practitioners of the quasi-black arts are at least as trustworthy as the modern scientific specialist, who appears so imposingly on the modern mining company's prospectus.

It strikes one as probable that, with all the fuss and precautions of our ancient lawgivers, there must have been something behind in the way of considerable treasures hidden away in various parts of the island. Our ancient British kings and chiefs carried a good deal of treasure about their persons in the way of chains and ornaments, like that collar of gold that Malachi "won from the proud invader." As they often died fighting, or hidden away in bogs or morasses, it is probable that as land was brought into cultivation a good many of these early hoards were unearthed and went into the melting pot without troubling the King's coroner. In this way we may account for the riches of the Irish museums in ancient gold ornaments, and the general poverty of English collections in such

objects. The "proud invader," too, whether he came before or after the Roman domination, probably left his relics. There was long a curious tradition about an ancient barrow in one of our northern counties, that it was haunted by the spectre of a warrior in gold armour. When the barrow was opened, not many years ago, a curious confirmation of the legend was afforded by the discovery of the remains of a warrior whose armour, though not actually gold, bore traces of heavy gilding. That should be a warning to us not altogether to despise such traditions.

Of traditions of buried treasure attaching to the sites of Roman camps and deserted cities, there are plenty still to be met with. A familiar instance is that of the riches to be found at Uriconium, the modern Wroxeter,

Near the brook of Bell,
There is a well
Which is richer than any men can tell.

Doubtless in a wealthy commercial city overwhelmed with sudden destruction, as was the case with the ancient Uriconium, much treasure was actually buried or thrown into wells or drains. But then the treasure seekers of the Middle Ages have generally exploited such sites pretty thoroughly, and modern excavations made in the interests of archaeological researches have brought little to light in the way of treasure. Great hoards of copper coins of the Empire have often been brought to light, but not much in the way of the precious metals.

We might expect that more treasure was concealed here and there during the long-continued strife between Briton and Saxon, and the Norman Conquest may have caused some deposits of buried hoards. But the Norman kings themselves, with their habits of accumulating hoards of specie against a rainy day, offer the most tempting studies to the treasure seeker.

King John, for instance, is a capital subject, for he was both a seeker for and hider of treasure. We find him digging for treasure in Northumberland about the sites of the stations on the Roman wall, and he was reputed to have great stores of treasure in his favourite strongholds. Somewhere buried in the sandy estuaries of Lincolnshire are the golden crown and jewels of King John, with the chests of treasure that were

carried in his train. But we may speculate, too, about other hoards, chiefly buried beneath the foundations of his castle walls, the secret of which was lost in the sudden death of the greedy King.

Again there is a Royal treasure, perhaps, at this moment, lying hid in some rocky chasms of the mountains of Wales—nothing less than the treasure of King Edward the Second, which he carried with him in his flight from his triumphant Queen and her paramour, and which they vainly, it would seem, after his capture, endeavoured to recover.

The Wars of the Roses, too, with their sudden catastrophes and total reversal of fortunes, gave rise without doubt to many secret deposits, the clue to which was lost by the destruction of those who made them. Then came the dissolution of the monasteries, and though rumour exaggerated the wealth of these establishments, and the King's commissioners had a vigilant eye to all their belongings, yet many precious treasures must have been hidden away by devout brethren, who looked forward to seeing them once more devoted to the service of the sanctuary.

The civil wars, too, had their deposits, both of plunder and of secret hoards; and we may be on the trail of buried treasure in following the detours of plots and conspiracies for which secret deposits of coin may have been made, abandoned in the heat of flight or lost sight of by the violent deaths of those concerned. How common and necessary the practice was of burying one's savings in time of panic we may learn from Mr. Pepys's "Diary," who, on the alarm of the Dutch invasion, hurried down with all his guineas to his father's house in Huntingdon, and there buried his treasure in the garden. His agonies of mind for the safety of his treasure, and the trouble he had in digging it up and sifting earth from guineas, are naïvely told by the diarist.

Now we arrive at the period fruitful above all others to the—imaginary—treasure seekers, that of the bold buccaneers; of the Spanish galleons charged with bullion; of the treasure fleets that were the choicest prey of the gallant sea rover.

Pirate or buccaneer, he had some favourite haunt about Key West, or among the islands of the Spanish Main—some cave filled with booty which one day he hopes to transfer in safety to his native

Devon. But a ship heaves in sight—it is a Spanish man-of-war—and such a contest ensues as has inspired the popular muse of the sailors' "shanty":

Both ships engage with equal rage,
And slaughter, dreadful scene!
The die is cast, the ball at last
Has reached the magazine.

There is an end of the pirate and his crew, but the secret deposit remains as a prize for some future adventurer. Or it may be that the buccaneers are only shipwrecked, and that one of the crew escapes with the fragment of an old chart, on which is marked the exact position of the buried treasure. The subject leaves plenty of play for the imagination, and, although often worked up in fiction, has always a kind of freshness about it, with a savour of truth and fact, for doubtless such a hoard does somewhere exist, if we could only find it.

Other countries, too, share our goût for hidden treasure. In Normandy, the English conquest in the fifteenth century, followed by their ultimate expulsion, has given rise to many traditions of buried treasure, which the least superstitious attribute to the English. Throughout France the Revolution without doubt gave occasion to many secret hoards, the owners of which may well have perished in the massacres and proscriptions of the Reign of Terror.

What treasures of the ancient world may still lie hidden among the débris of the past! Where are the riches of Babylon and Nineveh; where are the secret treasure chambers of Egypt; where the gold of the Phœnicians? Where is the tomb of Alaric, the Goth, that was crammed with all the richest spoils of Rome? Who has discovered the secret places of Mexico and Peru, where the untold wealth of mighty dynasties was stored?

All over the world there are fascinating stories of boundless wealth which is waiting for the seeker who knows the way to seek. But according to popular mythology all kinds of enchantments defend the mysterious hoards. Dragons and serpents, monsters of every form, goblins and demons of all ranks, are commissioned to assail the hardy adventurer. The chest of gold that is just in sight sinks deep with an earthquake shock into the very bowels of the earth.

A ROMANCE OF THE OXFORD SUMMER MEETING.

A COMPLETE STORY.

THERE were six of us. We were Extensioners. It was Oxford in the summer time. We were all teachers, except Bet, whose real name was Bethany. Bet was an artist. Three of us taught in High Schools. Kit, whose baptismal name, of course, was Katherine; Christina, whom we all called Chris; and our handsome Hannah. Then there was Tiny, a tall young woman who taught small boys in a grammar school; and I, Euphrosyne Inkle, a Board School mistress. Euphrosyne is a mouthful, I admit, and my familiar friends called me Syn. Bet and Chris were sisters, and Kit and Tiny were not only sisters, but twin sisters. This was our party.

All kinds of people come up to Oxford in the Long Vacation to attend lectures, chiefly women, and women who teach. Then there is a fair sprinkling of intelligent working men, a few parsons and City men, a few enthusiasts, an odd lot of foreigners, who come to study the movement, and a few ubiquitous and enterprising Americans, who want to know all about it that they may go home and copy. But the women predominate fearfully.

The flippant undergraduate who sang of

The throng
Of sisters, cousins, aunts, and nieces
Who crowd the streets, and fill the schools
With love of lectures still unsated,
Who're subject to no kind of rules,
And can't be proctorised or gated,

envied us our liberty in the city of dons, deans, doctors, and proctors, while he marvelled at our appetite for lectures.

We six had been up before several times, and Kit used to boast that she had never missed a Summer Meeting in Oxford. They say that the English take their pleasures sadly, and possibly frivolous females might consider a course of lectures and conferences a somewhat sad way of spending a holiday, but we liked it, and so did the other "sisters, cousins, and aunts" who disported themselves at Oxford. We were having a good time. Most of us went to five and six lectures in the day, and got in a college visit or two, a conference, an afternoon tea, an organ recital, and a conversazione into the bargain. We didn't waste our time in Oxford by any means. Our domestic arrangements suffered

sometimes, but such trifles as eating and drinking troubled us little.

"Can we breakfast at a quarter to eight?" one of us would ask anxiously. "I want to get to the theological lecture early."

"How shall we manage with lunch?" another would demand. "I'm at a lecture until half-past one."

"And I go to a lecture at two-thirty," another would exclaim.

"I shall start with the botanical party at two," would be the cry of another of us. Tea never seemed to fit in. We would arrange to have tea at five.

"I am at a lecture from four-forty to five-forty," would be the cry.

"And I want to go to lecture from six until seven."

"I am in the Bodleian from three until four."

We could never fit in, so we took our meals how and when we could.

At eight-thirty p.m. we were always due at some conversazione, concert, or special lecture by some great specialist on art or literature, and our day's work finished at ten-thirty p.m. Sometimes we suffered severely from mental indigestion, but we didn't admit it, at least some of us didn't, but after a time Chris and I began to flag and sometimes missed a lecture. Hannah, and Tiny, too, fell away from the paths of virtue, and occasionally went to the swimming baths, or a tennis match, or took canoes up the dreamy Cherwell. Bet went off sketching, after doing conscientiously three lectures, and turning up at garden-parties, concerts, and all the evening part of the programme; but Kit never faltered, she went steadily on, sternly attending all the lectures, even when her head ached, and her eyes were dim and unseeing with the weight of a constant stream of lectures poured steadily upon her.

"I don't believe in lectures," I said one night as we sat over coffee and biscuits at eleven p.m. "You know the story of the celebrated doctor, who said he had attended many hundreds of lectures during his long life, and on his death-bed he retained only enough information to put on the outside of an envelope."

Kit frowned on me.

"Lectures in the morning, lectures at midday, lectures in the dewy eve, lectures at night, even lectures become monotonous," murmured Chris.

Kit thought this was rank heresy, and

she stalked indignantly off to bed, while we sat up and talked of the people we met, especially the lecturers and Americans.

We knew several Americans. There was Dr. Hiram-Foote, the president of some intellectual society in Philadelphia, and Dr. Jameson of some University in Chicago, and a Mr. Lockwood, who had something to do with state education. Dr. Hiram-Foote was squat, and short, and pompous. Dr. Jameson was tall, and dry, and talkative; he always made remarks about your name, and asked a great many questions in a loud, impressive Yankee drawl. Mr. Lockwood was lean and meek. He always seemed sat upon, and when he ventured to make a remark, or ask a question, he looked frightened, as though he thought we were going to hit him. Then there was a terrible female, who wore terrible bonnets, and had wonderful little curls gummed all around her massive brow, she had an awe-inspiring nose, and the air of an injured and indignant Roman matron. She was a barrister-at-law, she had even been nominated for president, and she came to all the conferences and debates and spoke at them all, in a loud strident voice, never minding whether she knew anything at all about the subject under discussion or not. She sometimes got hold of Chris and me; she awed us with the glitter of her eye, and asked us hundreds of questions; we used to be so ashamed of our ignorance that at last we answered wildly, and made random shots. We called her the Inquisitor. Then there was a fat woman who had no waist, and who wore a most awful hat. She came to "lovely Oxford to hear the rousing lectures and to get soul," she told us. She had body enough in all conscience, so perhaps she needed soul. There was also a man with lank, black hair, who was an Extension lecturer in New York; he spoke sometimes, but he was a failure. And lastly there was Ned—among ourselves we always called him Ned. His name was Edward Slimfield; he told us that his mother called him Eddie, and his sisters called him Ned. We had never come across such a cool, audacious, light-hearted, erratic, joyous, and altogether delightful young man in our lives before. He was a revelation to us, this merry-hearted Yankee.

Some of us had met him a year ago at a previous Summer Meeting, and he claimed us as old acquaintances when he came upon us in the schools, at the conversazione, at the beginning of the Meeting. It was im-

possible to be dignified, or even ordinarily conventional, with this irrepressible young man. He was tall and fair, with blue eyes full of roguish mischief. He was utterly unabashed; nothing disconcerted him. We thought he admired Hannah, for he made a point of sitting by her at lectures and finding out where she was going, and Hannah was a bonnie lassie truly. We laughed at her sometimes, and Hannah would smile and laugh, too, for nobody could help laughing when we talked of Ned. He had been a student at the Leipzig University for the past two years, and had just taken his degree as Doctor of Philosophy he told me one day, as he overtook me on my way to the Sheldonian to see degrees conferred. He came with me and made fun of the whole ceremony in his own comical half-German, half-Yankee fashion. We saw a good deal of these Americans, and talked education to them. We had been for a water-party one day, and Dr. Hiram-Foote and Mr. Lockwood had talked to Chris and me all the time. They wanted further to discuss educational systems with us, and the next day we received an invitation to take tea with them and to meet Mrs. Crowfoot, the lady with the awful bonnet and curls. We had another engagement, so we had to decline. Ned, who stayed with Dr. Hiram-Foote, and Mr. Lockwood reproached us for not coming.

"I think we may ask the Americans here to tea," I said one day.

"They want to talk education to us," murmured Chris.

"I think Ned would like to come," said Hannah.

So it was agreed to ask them to afternoon tea; but Kit frowned and said nothing.

I was to ask the Doctor, but I didn't happen to meet him; but it transpired in the evening that Hannah had written to Ned and asked him and his two friends.

The next day we all made a point of being in for five o'clock tea.

"We must be very dignified," said Chris.

"American women are very free," said Bet. "We must show them that English women have reserve, and demand respect."

Hannah and Tiny smiled. They had seen more of Ned than we had. Presently Kit, who was seated in the window-seat of our first floor drawing-room, was hailed from below, and an audacious voice was asking:

"Shall I come in this way? I can get up."

It was Ned in a tall hat, a frock-coat, a flower in his buttonhole, and spick-and-span gloves.

"The door is round the corner," said Kit sedately; and presently Ned was ushered in.

"I've come, you see," he said, seating himself at the table and beginning to examine our albums and books of photographs; "and I say, Miss Hannah, the other fellows aren't coming. What made you ask them?"

"We wanted to see them, of course," said Chris.

"Really though?" he enquired. "You aren't serious now. Whatever do you want to see them for? It is only your politeness, I know, and I didn't tell them you asked them."

"Mr. Slimfield!" we said indignantly.

"Well, now, they couldn't have come, I guess," he said confidently. "Old Hiram Foote is lecturing on American Colleges from four-thirty to five-thirty, and Lockwood is going for a walk, he told me so himself; besides, he didn't know his way up here, and I wasn't going to bring him," he added with unblushing effrontery.

We had to laugh at his impudence, and he sat there smiling serenely and flung away the flower from his buttonhole, while he selected the prettiest rose from our bowl of flowers, fitted it into his buttonhole and asked Hannah to pin it for him.

We grew friendly with him in a few minutes, and laughed at him, scolded him, and admonished him, while he sat smiling sweetly at us. He told us that English women were stiff, and he couldn't stand it. Then he began to abuse the "yellow women." They were the committee ladies, and they wore a yellow ribbon. He had been to a Reception for American Visitors that afternoon, and a committee lady had tried to entertain him by showing him Oxford photographs. Ned's wrath was roused, and he asked us if the English women took the Americans for savages. Then we went down to tea, and Ned ate strawberries and made himself at home. After tea we played at rhymes. Kit made some very clever rhymes, and so did Bet, but Ned's were very irregular.

"Of course you are an admirer of Walt Whitman, Mr. Slimfield?" I said, when his rhymes were read; "and your poetry is clever and peculiar like his, but it does not rhyme."

Ned made me an elaborate bow in acknowledgement of the compliment. We had a very jolly time, and laughed a great deal. There was a conversazione that evening, and Ned took his leave to give us time to dress, assuring us that he had spent a pleasant time, and begging us not to be polite and dignified when we met later in the schools.

We saw a good deal of Ned after this; he was always dropping into our house and staying to tea, and amusing us with his comical remarks and whimsical oddities. We all liked him. Ned used to tell us of his tender passions; how one day he fell in love with Kit, and the next day with me, and the day after with Chris; and we used to laugh at him and sympathise with him. It appears he had a number of sisters at home who worshipped him, so Mr. Ned soon got into the way of treating us as sisters. We used to ask him if he wasn't abashed at meeting so many of us, and he used to laugh and call us the "great six."

He put a comical sketch in my album—a back view of the "great six." We were standing in a row—Hannah first, because she was tallest, I next, then Tiny, Bet, Chris, and Kit, in decreasing order. The sketch was clever, and each of us had some individuality brought out. He wrote underneath, from Walt Whitman:

O you daughters of the West!
O you young and elder daughters!
In the ranks you move united
Pioneers! O pioneers!

There was a debate one night at the Union on Socialism. The Woman Question was dragged in. A charming and enthusiastic girl named Primrose Meadowsweet spoke in favour of women. She was half in fun and half in earnest, but she spoke delightfully as she stood there, looking charming, and uttering audacious protests in sweetly modulated tones. Poor Ned lost his heart entirely. He said nothing to us that night, but he left us early, and we learned afterwards that he had managed to interview Miss Primrose Meadowsweet after the debate.

Next morning I went off alone to see the tapestry of Burne Jones and William Morris in Exeter Chapel, and to buy photographs and books. When I returned I found Ned in our drawing-room talking to Chris, Bet, and Kit. He had come to unburden his soul to us, and to tell how he had fallen in love with the charming and sweet-voiced Primrose.

We laughed at him at first, and asked him if he wasn't grateful for having six sympathetic women souls to come and open his heart to.

Later on, when the others went out, and Chris and I were left alone with the young fellow, we almost thought he was serious. He vowed he had never before seen a woman whom he loved as he loved this softly-spoken Primrose. She was certainly a lovely girl, and any young man might be excused for losing his heart when he saw and heard her. She was slim and graceful, clad in the soft folds of a heliotrope gown, with a large hat shading her exquisitely coloured face, a pair of starry blue eyes, and a bewitching smile. Ned seriously wanted our advice. It appears that he had managed to introduce himself to Miss Meadowsweet by representing himself as an enquiring Yankee who was thirsting for information on the Labour Question. He had discovered that the young lady was mightily interested in the Labour Movement, and had six working men at present in Oxford under her especial care. The result was that Miss Primrose had graciously invited him to afternoon tea with herself and her mother, to meet the six working men, who he affirmed were miners.

"The difficulty is," mused poor Ned, "that I don't know or care a rap about the Labour Question. I don't want to meet the miners, I only want to see her, and speak to her, and to ask her, if I dare, for the bit of yellow ribbon she wears." Miss Primrose Meadowsweet was a committee lady.

We laughed, and vowed we would warn the lady against him.

"How?" he asked.

"We'll tell her that you are a fraud, and that you don't care about miners."

"That I don't," he said. "Will they come with pickaxes over their shoulders?" he asked comically.

We couldn't say how the miners would appear at afternoon tea, but I surmised they would come in their best clothes, without their pickaxes.

"What am I to say about the Labour Question?" Ned asked with comical bewilderment.

"Only look interested and intelligent, and ask questions," advised Bet.

Ned seemed to find solace in talking to us, for he stayed all the morning, and accepted our invitation to lunch. I hunted up some pamphlets on the Labour Union

and the Red Van, and told him all I knew about the Eight Hours' Bill, and Bet gave him much information on the Land Question.

Bet and I were the progressive pair in the party of the "great six," and Ned listened to us meekly, took occasional notes, and finally vowed that he knew enough to stand for a Labour Candidate. But to complete his education we thrust some Fabian tracts on him, and advised him to go home and read them before he presented himself at the fair Primrose's tea-table. I had to return to my home that evening for my school duties next day, for my holiday was over. I wished him success with Miss Primrose, and hoped to meet him in Oxford at a future meeting, and I promised to send him pamphlet literature on Labour Questions.

Chris and the others wrote to me on most days, and told me what was happening.

"The fair Primrose seems to smile on our light-hearted Ned," she wrote. "He got on capitally with her, and her mother, and the miners. He offered to take the miners over the Sheldonian and the Divinity Schools, and his offer was gladly accepted. Then he rushed up to our house in consternation, to ask us what on earth he was to tell them. He declares he knows nothing, except that Cromwell stabled his horses and kept pigs in the Schools, and the undergraduates play jokes on the Doctors and read Latin poems in the Sheldonian. We got out guide-books and instructed him. He seemed duly grateful, and he sends many remembrances to you. He says he is 'sweating' over labour problems, and likes them."

"We had a debate at Keble," Bet wrote, "on the question of opening libraries on Sunday. Ned sat behind Miss Primrose Meadowsweet, and he never took his eyes off her all the time. When the ladies were invited to speak, Primrose got up as charming as ever, and smiled, and said her little say. Everybody was enchanted with her, and as for our poor Ned he looked transfigured, or translated. That boy is a perfect fool over her. She is charming and enthusiastic, with heaps of interest in life. I don't think she gives him a second thought. He says he wears a bit of yellow ribbon next his heart which belonged to her. Miss Meadowsweet sees a great deal of the Americans. Dr. Hiram-Foote visits there often. By the way, that horrid, squat little man is a very distinguished personage indeed. Fancy! and he is such

an objectionable little man. Tiny says he wants washing. Kit wishes he would have his hair cut, and I seriously think of advising him to have lessons in dancing and deportment."

But before the second part of the meeting terminated, matters grew tragic.

Dr. Hiram-Foote proposed to Miss Primrose Meadowsweet, and was accepted.

This news I received in a letter from Chris one Friday evening. "We can't think how our poor Ned will take it," she wrote. "We have just heard it. All Oxford is talking about it—all Extension Oxford, I mean. Can't you manage to come up to us on Saturday and have another Sunday in Oxford? You might try. It would be jolly to be all together one other Sunday; we shall all be far enough away this time next week."

I was interested in the news, and I wanted to see the girls again, so I went.

I got into Oxford at midday on Saturday, and was soon hearing all the Extension news from the others. Nothing had been seen of Ned since the engagement had been announced, and we were all wondering greatly how he had taken it.

"I believe he was only joking half his time," said Kit the sceptical; "he wouldn't have talked to us like he did if he had really cared for her."

"But he is so much on the surface, and so accustomed to have a houseful of home folk to go and tell his affairs to," said Chris.

"I think he was in earnest, and that he will take it badly," said our handsome Hannah, and she flushed as she spoke. Hannah knew more of him than we did, and never joked with him freely, nor scolded him, as we had fallen into the habit of doing.

Presently a ring at our bell startled us, and Ned was ushered in.

He was pale, and his fair hair was tumbled; his blue eyes were full of pain. He sat down quietly, so unlike his old laughter-loving, racketsy self.

"You have heard," he began, and we waited and made no remark. "I vowed I would ask the first woman I met to marry me," went on Ned. "And I met Mrs. Crowfoot down in the meadows."

"But hasn't she a husband?" interjected Hannah.

"She is a widow. She is twenty years older than I am. She accepted me. I'm engaged to her. Congratulate me," and

Ned put his hat down on the table and glared round at us all.

We didn't know what to say, but Kit broke the silence by saying severely:

"You ought to know better."

"I wish I'd met you instead," said Ned recklessly; and Kit stalked off in indignation. Kit was always very proper.

"Now she is offended," said Ned. "I didn't mean to offend any of you. You've been awfully good to me. I've come to say good-bye to you. Will you lend me a pair of scissors?" This request was to Hannah.

"What do you want them for?" she asked, producing them from her work-bag.

"Only to leave you each a lock of my hair," he said, cutting off a heap of fair curls from his brow and dividing them into six little heaps. "I'm going to leave one for the one you call Kit; if she won't have it send it on to Primrose Meadowsweet." And he took some narrow yellow ribbon from his pocket and began to tie up the shorn curls into six little bundles. Then he placed them in a row. "You can each take which you like," he said. "They are fairly divided. Now I guess I'll go. Good-bye."

"Are you leaving Oxford?" I asked.

"So you've come back," he said, recognising that I was present. "I'm glad to see you again. Yes, I'm leaving Oxford to-night."

"Are you going to America?" asked Chris.

"It depends," said Ned. "Good-bye, children."

"Good-bye."

And he vanished.

"How very odd he seemed," said Bet.

"It was silly of Kit to be offended," remarked Hannah. "Poor fellow!"

"I'm terribly sorry for him," murmured Chris.

Then we each took up a lock of his hair tied with the yellow ribbon. Chris put hers into her purse; Hannah slipped hers into her writing-case; and I pressed mine between the leaves of Walt Whitman's poems. Kit came in presently, saying:

"I think that young man is mad."

But she accepted the lock of hair and put it into her botany case among the specimens.

We saw nothing of Ned the next day, and we concluded he had left Oxford. We said nothing about him; but we felt vaguely uncomfortable concerning his movements. The Doctor was at the cathedral

with Miss Meadowsweet, who looked charming in a trailing pink gown with puffed sleeves. Mrs. Hiram Foote was also present with the American lady who wanted soul. She looked more majestic and more like a Roman matron than ever. Her bonnet was more formidable and her nose more awe-inspiring.

"Poor Ned!" murmured Chris, as she looked at her.

I came home by the Sunday evening express, and went to school as usual next day. The rest of the tragedy I only learned from the other five, and from the papers.

On Monday morning the dead body of our laughter-loving Ned was found entangled in the river weeds some miles up the Cherwell. It appears he had taken a canoe late on Saturday night and gone off in it, and that was the last that was ever seen of him alive.

"Fatal Accident to an American Extension," the papers said; and all kinds of theories were set afoot as to how it had happened. We sighed, and mourned, and held our peace, but we wondered uneasily how much of it was accident.

Poor, light-hearted Ned! We six mourned him as truly as any. We hope to go to America some summer to the intellectual Chantanqua meetings, and we mean to call and see Ned's mother and sisters, and tell them a little about their boy's last days. We each keep the lock of fair, curly hair, but I hope to give mine to Ned's mother some day.

LOCAL LITERATURE.

As everybody has not had the chance to visit Corinth, so not everybody has had the luck to go to Yarmouth (Great). Nevertheless, in spite of Corinth's classic fame and the elegant architectural order named after it, I venture to say that Yarmouth—for I have never been to Corinth, and never shall go there now—is, just now, much the pleasanter place of the two.

Yarmouth has affinities nearer home than Greece. You cannot, for instance, go to Rotterdam without thinking of Yarmouth; you cannot return from Holland to Yarmouth without thinking of Rotterdam. Although Yarmouth has no canals, it has something still better—a noble tidal river. The little trees on the South Quay and on the Boompjes, the front iron railings which

protect the houses from vulgar touch—unless at a very long arm's length—are Dutch or English, whichever you please. For the sake of good neighbourhood, say they are both. On Yarmouth beach a so-called Dutch fair used to be held. Fishing boats came and were hauled up on the sands by the men dressed in such Sunday clothes as they possessed, with the object of selling dried flounders and honey-sweetened gingerbread, and of carrying home lots of gaudy crockery resplendent with metallic glaze. If there happened to be a little tobacco on board, it travelled incognito and passed under the rose. It was no impediment to conversation between the sailors and their visitors that the one understood no English and the others no Dutch. A lively interchange of compliments and bargains was carried on all the same.

The Denes, an airy peninsular plain, stretching southward between stream and sea, is long enough and broad enough to afford ample room for Yarmouth races and their attendant crowds. If gigs and donkey-carts quarrel about the choice of places, it is simply because it is their nature to on every similar occasion.

Yarmouth possesses neither mountains nor valleys—no Upper and no Lower town. One spot, called Fullers' Hill, would require an accurate theodolite to determine its exact elevation, in feet—perhaps inches—above the adjacent plain. It has "rows"—i.e., straight alleys—so narrow that they can only be traversed by wheeled vehicles specially constructed after an old Roman pattern. Elsewhere, streets are built wide enough to allow the passage of carts and carriages; here the carts are made to fit the width of the lane which they have to penetrate. You cannot pass a ship's cable through the eye of a darning-needle.

On its sandy soil, with its sharp sea-breezes, Yarmouth is healthy and, moreover, tonic. People who complain of never being hungry should go there with the certainty of finding an appetite. Hotel keepers would be justified in charging newcomers a trifle extra for every meal during the first days of their stay.

Previous to railway times, Yarmouth was somewhat isolated from the rest of East Anglia, as East Anglia was from the rest of England. Traces of that isolation might still be perceived by those who looked sharp after them. On no spot in the United Kingdom is "Home, sweet Home" sung with more heartfelt con-

viction. Yarmouth still engenders a sturdy, independent race, who know their own minds and are ready to assert their own rights and privileges. Its inhabitants are fond of their fair borough, proud of it, zealous both to promote its prosperity and to proclaim its good name far and wide.

It has done this, almost unconsciously, by collecting notes and keeping diaries and journals in record of facts which subsequently become interesting, and even important, to topographical enquirers and students of local history. One of these unassuming registers is "Leaves from the Diary and Journal of the late Chas. J. Palmer, F.S.A., edited, with notes, by Frederick Danby Palmer, Great Yarmouth, 1892." But in judging the significance of the facts recorded, the date of entry should be considered. Thus, December 8th, 1823, "the town was first lighted with gas this evening"—an event the importance of which at the time could best be appreciated by those who had felt the inconveniences of previous obscurity.

Those who have forgotten, if they ever knew, the electioneering saturnalia of pre-reform days, are told of an intending candidate who came to Yarmouth to canvass the borough. According to custom, he had to entertain the freemen at breakfast; for which he was charged so heavy a bill that he changed his mind and left the place, saying that he could not afford to stop to dinner. At Norwich, they managed matters then by a different form of hospitality, called "cooping." Freemen whose principles were uncertain and shifty, and whose adverse vote seemed possible, were kidnapped, carried off bodily without their making much, if any, resistance, to some low public-house, shut up under lock and key, like fowls put up to fatten (whence the term), and there supplied, at the candidate's expense, with all they could eat and drink, until the day of election was over. At the close of the poll they were turned out into the cold, as useless, and no longer worth their keep or cooping.

A genealogical puzzle touching a neighbouring grandee is worth saving from oblivion. It had been made out that the Earl of Albemarle was his own grandfather, by the following reason: The Earl married for his second wife Miss Hanlock, a niece of Mr. Coke, of Holkham; consequently Mr. Coke was Lord A.'s uncle. Mr. Coke married for his second wife

Lady Ann Keppel, daughter of Lord Albemarle; consequently Lord A. is father to Mr. Coke. But your uncle's father must necessarily be your grandfather, and, therefore, Lord Albemarle, being his uncle's father, must be his own grandfather.

Remembering what travelling was in coaching days, Mr. Palmer may be said to have travelled considerably, for he even got as far as Scotland—by mail. Like every one else, he admired Edinburgh, whose people, he says, aver that the finest street in the world—George Street—is spoiled by the presumption of the clergy and the modesty of the physicians, because about the centre of the street the line of houses on one side is interrupted by the projection of a church, and on the other, immediately opposite, a gap is occasioned by the College of Physicians, which recedes from the line of street.

On September the twentieth, 1823, he dined with Mr. Leslie, of Denlugas, at his seat about eight miles from Banff. Mr. Leslie kept a piper, and it was here that he first heard the sound of the bagpipes, which played during dinner, and again during breakfast the following morning. Their sound is shrill and discordant to an unpractised ear, and is only to be tolerated at a distance.

As Keats, the poet, was killed off by an article, so an Earl of Seafield was driven mad by a speech. The sight of his seat, Cullen House, a large pile of buildings erected at various periods, called forth the anecdote related as the circumstance which first produced symptoms of insanity in the Earl. When in the House of Commons he had with great care and labour prepared a speech, which he delivered to the complete satisfaction of himself and friends; but he had scarcely resumed his seat before Mr. Ponsonby rose, and with that poignancy of satire for which he was distinguished, ridiculed the speech so completely that Lord Seafield never recovered from the shock it gave him.

Many anecdotes have been told of the fate of pictures. The following, according to Mr. Palmer's belief, can be relied on as authentic.

When West, the picture-dealer, was an apprentice with a picture-frame dealer in London, he bought for seven shillings a picture which, although in a very dirty state, he considered was an original painting by Ruysdael. He partially cleaned it, when it was seen by Mr. Phillips, a picture

dealer in London, who gave him fifteen pounds for it. It turned out to be an exquisite picture—a waterfall—by Ruysdael. It was subsequently purchased by the late Dr. Currie, who paid eight hundred pounds for it. It afterwards came into the hands of Isaacs, the picture-dealer, who sold it to Mr. Gunthorpe, of Yarmouth, for a long price.

The late King of Sweden had a beautiful picture by Raffaele of the Almighty, personified under the figure of an old man. So attached was his Majesty to this picture that he would never part from it. When he was compelled to leave his kingdom during the late war, he embarked on board a Yarmouth vessel, and took with him his favourite picture, which for greater convenience was taken from its frame and rolled up. By some accident during the voyage the picture was lost, and escaped the diligent search made for it; the circumstance soon became publicly known. An eminent picture-dealer in London, hearing the loss the King of Sweden had sustained, and that it was a Yarmouth vessel which had conveyed his Majesty, determined to come to Yarmouth to make enquiries concerning it. He there learnt that a small picture had been found in the hold of the vessel on her return, but being considered of no value, it was about to be thrown overboard, when a sailor begged it for his wife. The picture-dealer immediately went to the cottage of the woman, when, to his great joy, he discovered among many daubs which decorated the walls a picture which he knew, notwithstanding the dirt with which it was covered, to be the object of his search. He purchased it for a few shillings, and when properly cleaned, sold it for one thousand two hundred pounds.

The above samples suffice to indicate what a mine of curios is to be found in the "Leaves." Not the least interesting of these is the journalist's notice of the house in which he resided. Built in 1596 by Benjamin Cooper, then Member of Parliament for Yarmouth, it was a fine specimen of the decorative style of architecture peculiar to the Elizabethan age. A large room abovestairs, used as a withdrawing room, has some little historical interest attached to it; for there is a tradition that it was the scene of a meeting held by the principal leaders of the Parliamentary Party, during the grand Rebellion, to determine the death of King Charles the First.

A DISTURBING ELEMENT.

A STORY IN SIX CHAPTERS.

By EVELYN FLETCHER.

CHAPTER III.

THERE was no lack of conversation at Aunt Joan's dinner-table that night, and the three ladies all agreed that Rupert made himself excellent company. He had travelled much, and not only in the beaten tracks of the conventional tourist; and he had known how to make the most of his many favourable opportunities of studying men and manners. Thus he brought, as it were, an invigorating breath of outside air into the somewhat exclusive feminine circle at Ravensbourne, freshening up their ideas and widening their interests. Aunt Joan enjoyed herself immensely, for it was but rarely she had an opportunity of measuring her caustic wit against that of a worthy opponent, and the exercise was the more appreciated from its very rarity. She was a woman of too much originality and decision of character ever to grow dull under any circumstances; but on this particular evening even the admiring Emmie was astonished at her vigorous sallies and terse repartees. Emmie herself—though something of a chatterbox when the mood was on her—was no great talker; her ideas, she was convinced, were commonplace, and she had never outgrown a certain shy diffidence that—at least in this last decade of the nineteenth century—is quite as commonly found at sixty as at sixteen. Thus she presently started and blushed when Miss Raven—who had laid aside her helmet for a plain black lace kerchief—remarked abruptly:

"You mustn't think we are always so lively, nephew. Often we haven't a word to say. There was Emmie, now, t'other day, brought out a book as big as a church and put it down on the dinner-table. She read it all through dinner, too. Such manners!"

"Why not?" retorted Aunt Emmie hastily. "I must tell you, Rupert, that we have lived together so long that we know each other's very thoughts, and this makes it a little dull at times. So I just got out 'Sir Charles Grandison,' and very interesting I found it. Oh, yes; you may smile, Joan; but if one has no lovers oneself, the next best thing is to read about those that have. I told Maud so, and she

laughed and quite agreed with me. Now, the lady there had plenty."

"My dear Emmie!" and Aunt Deborah frowned repressively, "what will Rupert think of you?"

"That I'm an old fool, perhaps; and he won't be far wrong either. But it's hard if my sixty years won't excuse me if I like to be sentimental in my reading; and I do like it, Deborah. I confess it honestly."

"Quite right, too," Rupert laughed. "You ought all to be sentimental—in moderation. A woman without sentiment is——"

"Tea without sugar." Miss Raven completed the sentence for him. "Both, unfortunately, are very fashionable nowadays."

"The more reason that you should have the courage of your opinions, and show the world how beautiful a thing sentiment is, more especially when combined with good sense," he replied.

"A very unusual combination," said Miss Raven drily. "I fear Emmie can hardly oblige you so far; nor can I. For if she has the sentiment without the sense, I have the sense without the sentiment. You must wait till Maud comes to-morrow."

"And who is Maud, if I may ask?"

"An old friend of mine. She combines Emmie's and my virtues, without the restraining influence of our vices, and is, consequently, almost too good for this wicked world, and quite too good for me. I ask her here to keep us humble."

"Oh, Joan!"

"I'm not saying that it does so, Emmie; but only that I ask her with that object. Rupert can judge for himself how far my efforts are successful. If you will join us presently in the drawing-room, nephew, for a game of whist, we shall be very glad to see you."

"Really, Joan, it is too unkind to expect Rupert to find any satisfaction in such poor play as ours," Aunt Deborah remarked; "it can but chafe him to observe our mistakes."

"Then he needn't come," quoth Miss Raven bluntly, as she rose and looked at him with her grim smile. "I shan't resent your desertion, young man, whatever Deborah may do. Please yourself."

"I shall, by joining you in half an hour," he laughed, as he held the door open for the little procession of aunts to pass out.

"That's right. Come along, girls, and leave him to himself."

"Really, Joan, you are strangely lacking in dignity."

Aunt Deborah's soft tones were drowned in her sister's jovial laughter, and the three ladies disappeared into the drawing-room in quite a little whirl of mirth and merriment.

Rupert went out into the garden and pondered on life at Ravensbourne over a peaceful cigar. He was amused and interested in these new-found relatives of his, and after his many wanderings the very quietness of this old country house had its attractions. By-and-by, no doubt, he might weary of it and long to get back to a more stirring life and the busy haunts of men; but just at present it satisfied him, and when he repaired to the drawing-room half an hour later he was quite prepared to enjoy even the promised game of whist.

"We play for love, nephew; for love," Aunt Joan said emphatically. "By this means we keep the game from growing too exciting, and excitement is not good for Deborah. You don't object to the stakes, I hope?"

"Certainly not," he said cheerfully. "Shall we cut for partners?"

"No; you play with Deb. Now, Emmie, don't go to sleep."

It was a very exciting game that, though, perhaps, hardly conducted on scientific principles. Aunt Emmie had an unfortunate tendency to drop asleep at times that rather complicated matters, more especially if it overcame her—as happened more than once—in the middle of her deal. At such times, Aunt Joan smiled grimly and brought down her hand with considerable force on the table. Then Aunt Emmie awoke with a start and dealt out the cards with guilty alacrity, or else sought to cover her confusion by assuming an air of bland unconsciousness that deceived no one. On the whole, her sister bore with her patiently, though she could scarcely find her a satisfactory partner. Mrs. Cranstoun, however, was not so merciful, and said many mildly satirical things in her soft, sweet voice; to which the offender paid not the slightest attention. And, certainly, the old lady's own play was not such as to justify her in taking very high ground: she made innumerable mistakes, and explained her reasons for every card she played in a somewhat too frank manner, though some explanation undoubtedly appeared due to a partner whose lead she never returned, while she invariably took the tricks he had already secured. She grew very excited, despite Miss Raven's precautions, and, when they finally won the rubber, Rupert

was amused beyond measure at the immense satisfaction she betrayed and the airs of superiority she gave herself.

"It is a real pleasure," she said condescendingly; "yes, a very real pleasure, indeed, to play with you, Rupert. My late husband understood cards well" (she did not add—what nevertheless was the fact—that they had been the ruin of him), "and consequently I have been accustomed to a very different style of play from that which contents my sisters. Yours reminds me agreeably of old times, and I have little doubt that with practice you would become a fair player; quite above the average in fact. I am rarely mistaken in my estimate of my partner's powers."

"I hope you will afford me opportunities of improving myself," Rupert said gallantly; and the old lady smiled well pleased.

"A very superior young man," she remarked a little later, as she and Aunt Joan parted for the night at the door of the latter's bedroom.

"The new gardener? Yes," Miss Raven assented, with a wicked twinkle in her keen black eyes.

"No, Joan, not the new gardener," with dignity; "I am speaking of our nephew, and you know it."

"Our nephew!"

It had come to that already!

CHAPTER IV.

"RUPERT," said Aunt Joan abruptly, as they sat at breakfast the next morning, "Maud is coming by the twelve-fifteen train, and I am going to send you to the station to meet her."

"Delighted, I'm sure. And how shall I identify her?"

"Oh, there will be no difficulty about that. Besides, Saxton knows her, and she knows Saxton. Once seen, Maud is not easily forgotten."

"And how am I to address Mrs.—or Miss—Maud?"

"She is a spinster, like myself," she replied shortly.

Rupert did not believe that possible, but he kept his conviction to himself. It was no easy matter thoroughly to realise one Aunt Joan; to imagine two he found a task altogether beyond his powers. On the whole he thought their party was already complete enough, but that was no affair of his.

"You'll make up your whist-party without me to-night," he remarked. "I suppose I shall have to play 'patience'!"

"If you prefer it, of course; otherwise Emmie there will be happy to resign in your favour. She hates cards."

"Indeed that is quite true. I never play, save as an alternative to dummy," Aunt Emmie exclaimed; "and I believe I'm worse than the alternative."

"On the whole, Emmie, and speaking with conscientious sisterly impartiality, I believe you're right," said Aunt Deborah sweetly. "It is an exquisite morning, Rupert. Will you accompany me for a little stroll round the garden?"

Of course, Rupert expressed his readiness to do so, and offered her his arm, which she accepted with a graceful little air of elderly coquetry, that became her wonderfully well.

Aunt Joan watched them with immense amusement as she bustled about, attending to her household matters. She was proud of her nephew in a grim, uncompromising sort of way, and she had a good-natured kind of contempt for her sister, whose little airs and graces amused, even while they irritated her. Yet she admired Mrs. Cranstoun, too; she had always admired her, with the almost involuntary admiration a plain, practical person often accords to a pretty, affected one. She knew that she would not resemble her for any consideration, but yet she did not fail to appreciate those very qualities that were most unlike her own, and to value them, perhaps, at a little above their true worth. Joan Raven had much plain common sense, and a keen sense of humour—qualities in which her sister Deborah was singularly deficient. These helped her through life, and taught her to make the best even of somewhat uncongenial companions and a limited sphere of action. Her strong individuality would never have suffered her to become just like other people even under the most commonplace conditions, and circumstances and natural inclination alike had made her life a somewhat lonely and peculiar one. Thus, nature and experience had worked together, and certainly between them they had produced a "character." So much it was easy to see, but opinions were a little divided as to whether or not the "character" was an altogether amiable one.

Mrs. Cranstoun found her stroll in the garden so agreeable that she prolonged it till the appearance of the carriage warned Rupert that it was time to start for the station—not altogether to her satisfaction.

"So like Joan, to arrange for you to

go," she said slightly; "but then, Joan is always eccentric, and apt to interfere in other people's matters. She is a good creature, though, Rupert, however little you may think it—a very good creature."

"Indeed, I've never doubted it," he replied.

"Ah, you hardly know her yet. But there, I mustn't keep you; it's quite time you were carrying out your Aunt Joan's orders."

"You're right, Deborah," and Miss Raven herself stepped out of a neighbouring window. "Be off at once, sir, and don't keep my old friend waiting."

"All right, I'm off," he laughed; and five minutes later the carriage was bearing him swiftly to the station to meet the lady who was "like" Aunt Joan.

The train was not yet in when he arrived, so he waited on the platform, strolling up and down, and watching the few people who were assembling there in the leisurely manner of those who live far from the bustle and activity of any large town.

At length the sharp sound of the signal-bell roused him from his contemplation of the country folk, and he turned all his attention to the approaching train. It steamed slowly into the station and stopped. Half-a-dozen doors were opened, and half-a-dozen people got out; but there was no old lady like Aunt Joan amongst them. He looked again, more attentively. No, there was no old lady at all.

A little pile of luggage was being heaped up at the further end of the platform, and a girl was standing near it; but she was a young and pretty girl, not in the slightest degree resembling Aunt Joan.

There was a shrill whistle, and the train moved out of the station. Rupert strolled down the platform towards the pile of luggage, and asked the nearest porter if there was any one for Ravensbourne.

"Ravensbourne, sir? Yes, sir. That's the lady, sir. This is the gentleman from Ravensbourne, miss."

The girl turned and looked at him with a smile.

"Mr. Leigh?" she said interrogatively. "Thank you for coming. Aunt Joan said you would meet me."

"Of course," and he took the hand she offered him, and hoped he did not look as astonished as he felt, "Aunt Joan's will is law, you know."

"You have found that out already?" Rupert thought he had never heard so

musical a laugh as accompanied the words. "Is the carriage here, or has Aunt Joan commanded us to walk?"

"No, no; the carriage is here. Have you all your luggage ready?"

"Yes; but it can come in the cart as usual. The porter will see to that."

"You are evidently an experienced traveller," he said, as they left the station together. "You don't leave me much to do."

"I'm very sorry I'm not more incapable; but it's really Aunt Joan's fault. She hadn't prepared me for so efficient an escort. Well, Saxton, how has the world been treating you?"

"Fairly, miss, thank you. I hope I see you well, miss; and the Rector, and all the family?"

"All well, thank you."

Saxton, this exchange of courtesies satisfactorily effected, touched up the horses, and Rupert found himself free to continue the conversation with his pretty companion.

"What sort of an escort had Aunt Joan prepared you for?" he asked with some curiosity.

The girl glanced at him and laughed.

"No, no, it is too absurd," she said merrily.

"May I not share the joke?"

"You mightn't see it. It might make you angry."

"What a disagreeable fellow you must think me!"

"Oh, no, I don't; but the whole position is so ridiculous. Do you know why I am here to-day?"

She broke off, looking at him intently with eyes that laughed in spite of all her efforts to keep them serious.

"Because Aunt Joan willed it, I suppose."

"Yes; but why?" she persisted.

"I haven't an idea."

"I am here—to amuse you! Isn't it good of me, and aren't you gratified?"

"Immensely. But I don't quite understand."

"Neither do I, for you don't look as if you would be a great bore to the old ladies," she said candidly. "From the way aunt wrote I fancied you were quite a boy; a sort of bear, you know, to whom I was to be leader, and take him about, and keep him out of mischief. And now you prove to be—something quite different. Oh, dear, what a disappointment!"

"You are a disappointment, too, if you come to that," he replied, joining in her laughter. "I was prepared to see——"

"What? Oh, do tell me!" as he paused and looked at her impressively.

"A second Aunt Joan. There, think how far you have fallen short of my expectations."

"And how great must be your relief! No; I don't sympathise with you one bit. The three weird sisters are very nice, but there are quite enough of them for one family. You couldn't really wish for a fourth."

"And you have come here to amuse me?"

He spoke as though he found the idea an extremely pleasant one.

"No," she said promptly, "not to amuse you—to amuse the bear, who existed only in my own distorted imagination."

"Can't we bring that bear to life somehow?" he suggested.

But she shook her head.

"No use; it wouldn't be the same thing at all. A bear of fifteen one can put up with; but a bear of five-and——"

She hesitated and coloured a little.

"Thirty." He completed the sentence for her. "You are right, I'm afraid. I'm a little old for the part."

"I wonder why Aunt Joan mystified us both?" she said thoughtfully; "and I wonder even more why I never heard of you before. I flattered myself I had come to the end of her family complications long ago."

"It seems a little confusing," he replied. "I'm not at all clear that I know all about it yet."

"Perhaps I can help you," she said, turning her deep blue eyes full upon him. "You are the son of Aunt Joan's eldest sister, are you not?"

"Yes, and your cousin!"

But she shook her head emphatically.

"Not at all, Mr. Leigh. We are not related ever so remotely. Aunt Joan is the sole connecting-link between us."

"And the other aunts—what of them?"

"They are my aunts; but not yours. In point of fact you haven't a scrap of relationship to any of us except Aunt Joan."

"Aunt Joan is a very estimable woman," he remarked sententially. "I respect Aunt Joan, and I am grateful to her."

"Have you seen her in the helmet?" the girl asked irrelevantly. "But of course you have, for she never wears anything

else. Yes, I admire her, too; but I don't admire the helmet."

"There you show the triviality of the feminine mind," Rupert observed with a smile.

"Do you call the helmet a triviality?" Maud enquired in an awe-struck tone. "To me, now, it seems a very solid matter indeed."

"I suppose Aunt Deborah is more to your taste?" and he looked at her thoughtfully.

"Her clothes are," with a frank laugh. "See," as the carriage turned in at the gates, "there are the old ladies waiting to receive us. Don't mistake me, Mr. Leigh," she added, turning to him with sudden earnestness, "I'm very fond of them all, only I can't help laughing sometimes—they are funny, you know—and they don't mind. At least, Aunt Joan doesn't, and Aunt Emmie likes it; but it isn't because I don't care for them, for they've always been very good to me."

He had no time to reply, for even as Maud spoke the carriage stopped, and she sprang down to greet the old ladies, with all of whom she was evidently a favourite.

"How you chatter, child!" Miss Raven exclaimed, as she stood in her favourite attitude, with her hands on her hips. "Poor Rupert must be quite worn out! You're looking well, though, very well, and you get more like your aunt every time I see you."

"Which of my aunts, please?" she asked quickly.

"Myself, of course. Oh, not Deborah; she's the beauty of the family. There, run and take your hat off, for we'll be ready in a minute, and I grow no fonder of waiting. Emmie has been all the morning upsetting the nicknacks in your room and putting things out of order; so run up and tell her it's all charming and just as you like it. Be off with you at once."

And Maud flew upstairs accordingly.

Then Aunt Joan turned to Rupert abruptly.

"You had no difficulty in recognising her?"

"None at all—when I heard who she was. From your description I had expected a rather older lady."

"I've no doubt you had."

And Aunt Joan laughed.

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MISS LATIMER OF BRYANS.

BY ELEANOR C. PRICE.

Author of "Alexia," "Red Towers," "The Little One," etc.

CHAPTER XXI.

A WALK FROM THE STATION.

MRS. NUGENT found a good deal to occupy her in London at this time. Arthur's affairs were a little complicated now that, instead of returning to India, he was to leave the army and marry. His health was still an anxiety, and he was not quite so manageable as his mother wished, either on that subject or others. He did not complain of his fate, it was true; but his mother, at least, was never allowed to forget that he had been "trapped" into his engagement. Always a spoilt child, he felt that here he had the whip-hand over his mother. The whole arrangement was hers. She might have the credit of it, but if there were any blame, anything to regret, anything unsatisfactory, the responsibility for that also would fall on her.

Mrs. Nugent took all this calmly enough, having gained her chief end, a good marriage for Arthur. She was a little hurt sometimes by his tone, which lacked something of its old amiability; but she had far too much good sense to make this anything of a real grievance. As long as Poppy and her aunt were with them, both in Paris and London, Arthur's undercurrent of discontent seemed too absurd, too boyish, to want any serious consideration at all. When he was with Poppy, the object of her first and most unmis-takeable devotion, not a shadow ever

crossed his face. His manner to her was irreproachable. It was hardly possible to believe him in earnest when he tossed impatiently away from some remark or question of his mother's, with a sudden cloud on his fair brow, a sudden muttered exclamation of this kind—"Everything's an infernal bore!"

"Are not you ashamed, Arthur?"

"Well, it's your doing."

Mrs. Nugent wished that the marriage could have been hurried on, could have taken place even before Christmas, but this was not easy to arrange. First, it was nobody's wish but her own; and then there was much business to be despatched by lawyers. Nobody seemed to think it possible that a landed proprietor such as Miss Latimer could be married off in a few weeks like any ordinary girl. Even the faithful Fanny turned a deaf ear to Mrs. Nugent's hints on this subject; she loved her niece and was in no hurry to lose her. Besides, she had designs for a really pretty wedding in the old church at Bryans, in late spring or early summer. She knew that Poppy herself would like this, and that it would be very popular at Bryans. Poppy's own feeling for the people there was by no means without response; if they belonged to her she also belonged to them, and in their own slow way they knew it.

Mrs. Nugent had half expected that Arthur would be more like his old self when he was left alone with her in London lodgings, Poppy and her aunt having gone down to Bryans. They were to follow them in about a fortnight, when Mrs. Nugent had finished her most pressing business. A little later there was to be a shooting party at Bryans. Otto and Alice Nugent were going down, and a few other old

friends. Mrs. Nugent looked forward to this visit as a period of refreshment; and her active mind rejoiced in the idea of planning the many improvements in Poppy's old home of which Fanny Latimer had talked. In the meantime she was ready, and expected Arthur to be ready also, to attend to his own business. With a mixture of annoyance and amusement she found him restless, impatient, nervous, irritable, idle, sulky, unfit and unwilling to attend to anything at all. He was languid and unwell, too; London did not agree with him. Poppy being gone, he seemed to have lost any interest in present or future. Whatever he might have said to his mother, the truth appeared to be that he found life difficult without Poppy. Mrs. Nugent smiled to herself, though she felt a little angry, but she was always indulgent to Arthur. Having endured his humours for two or three days, she at last said one morning, with a little impatience:

"After all, Arthur, you can do nothing in London. Suppose you run down and surprise them at Bryans. It would be interesting to know what the place is really like, and a breath of country air would do you good."

"Wouldn't it bore them, don't you think?"

"You are the best judge of that," said Mrs. Nugent.

Arthur looked down. At first the cloud of weary discontent seemed to rest more heavily than ever on his drooping eyelids.

"He still looks horribly ill," thought his mother, with compunction. "No wonder he is cross, poor boy. It is too much for the sweetest temper to feel like that when he wants to go in for all sorts of things. He had much better go to Poppy; she is the only person who can manage him now, and I do believe he adores her, though he tries to tease me."

Arthur went down that same day, pretending to the last moment that he did not care to go, yet brightening visibly every hour before he started. He had neither written nor telegraphed; it amused him to see the place for the first time unexpected and as a stranger. His mother suggested that there might be no conveyance at the station.

"Oh, I shall get a trap of some kind," he said.

He was not sorry for his rash confidence, even when he got out at the quiet little

station and found that in fact there was nothing at all, and that a walk of nearly two miles lay between him and Bryans. He left his bag in the office, asked his way of the porter, and was starting off along the yellow, muddy road, when somebody came running behind him, and he turned round to see the station-master, fat, red, and panting, snatching the cap off his head of curly hair.

"I beg your pardon, sir; excuse me, sir, but did you expect the carriage to meet you from Bryans Court?"

Arthur stared at the man. At this rate his incognito did not seem likely to last long.

He was not altogether displeased, however, and secretly thought the man a genius. A pleasant smile came into his eyes as he replied to him:

"No, I did not, thank you."

He quite intended to be popular among his wife's people.

"I beg your pardon, indeed, sir. I thought—I was going to say that I could send a boy up at once, if there was any mistake about the carriage."

Arthur was amused at the man's positiveness. Evidently he was very sure that this solitary passenger could be nobody but himself. It did not suit him, however, to have his coming announced beforehand; one of the charms of the adventure was the idea of taking Poppy by surprise.

"No; much obliged to you," he said. "I will send down for my bag."

He walked away, leaving the station-master's curiosity unsatisfied. That good man spent some minutes staring after him, till he had crossed the bridge and disappeared into the shadow, where the road ran through a dark ravine of stony banks and beech-woods.

"It is him, however," he concluded. "He didn't say it wasn't. And a handsome young fellow, too, though he looks precious ill."

Arthur walked slowly up in the damp autumnal shade. He was some time climbing the hill from the bridge; the road was heavy, and he was languid and tired, though a certain excitement carried him on in spite of himself. His eyes wandered to right and left through vistas of grey stems. The woods were chiefly beech, varied by birch, fir, and holly. Near the top of the hill they broke away on each side into scattered groups of large, fine trees, and a few of the grandest old trunks leaned forward half across the road,

which still ran low and muddy between rugged, uneven banks. The top of the hill once reached, the fields, large and sweeping, spread in broad slopes to distant woods again; and now, under the grey sky, all the gorgeous colouring of the trees, in every shade of brown, yellow, red, purple, seemed to glow and burn more richly for the absence of the sun.

Arthur looked at everything with interest; trees, fields, low stone walls, cattle and sheep feeding. Did it all belong to Poppy? The capabilities of the country for sport occupied him more than its present singular beauty. Poppy had given him glowing accounts of the hunting in which she delighted. Arthur himself, though not a very keen sportsman, felt more interest in shooting, and was haunted by doubts and fears as to whether the keepers were likely to have done their duty during these years with no master to rule over them.

Walking was more pleasant on this higher ground, where the road had broad green margins, and sweet fresh whiffs of air, cool and reviving, came blowing with a smell of grass and earth across the fields. It did not seem very long before the village roofs came in sight, half hidden as they were by the trees that clustered everywhere. The road ran slightly downhill into the village, approaching the level of the river and its bridge. On the opposite slope Arthur could now see the grey church tower, with a background of woods and a foreground of thatched cottages. Above and beyond again, from this point, he could see chimneys rising in the midst of trees.

"There it is!" he thought.

He did not wish to ask his way. Finding himself at the lower end of the village, where two roads met, he did not realise that the left-hand road, which did not look much more than a country lane, would take him straight up to the Court gates and avenue, or that by going that way he would gain a much finer first impression of his future home. He walked on by the more frequented road, which led along the village street, over the bridge, uphill again, turning to the left to pass the church, then on by farms and cottages, past the old house at the corner. Here he came to a standstill. He saw nobody; only a few women and children had gaped after him as he came through the village. Now he must certainly be close to the Court; but where was its

entrance? He was a little shy of going in at what looked like back gates, coming upon servants or garden men, stealing upon Poppy in some unauthorised way.

"I'll try this lane," he thought. "It may lead round to the front somehow. The house looks south, I know, and there is an avenue leading straight up. This may bring me into it."

So it came to pass that he opened the little green gate, and turned into the mossy path that Poppy herself had come down not many minutes before on her way to Church Corner.

Arthur was a little flushed, both with his walk and its difficulties. As he advanced into the dark, yellow-carpeted shade, he rather wished that he had sent a telegram to say he was coming. He had not bargained, indeed, for a two-mile walk on frightfully muddy roads before presenting himself to Poppy. He was tired, and the state of his boots was disgraceful. There was something which made a man rather nervous, too, in the stillness, the loneliness of this palace in the woods. There was something deathlike in it.

"I wouldn't live here all the year round for twice the money," thought the young soldier as he walked slowly on. "It's awfully depressing."

Then the whole world came to life suddenly. A wind shook the trees—the same little gust which sent the rose-branch tapping against old Farrant's parlour-window—and a gleam of pale exquisite sunshine shot suddenly through the trembling twigs and glittering leaves which turned it to gold, making that dark woodland cave a fairyland of dancing light and shadow. And there in Arthur's path, just as if the Dryad of the place had travelled swiftly home on the sunbeam, fresh and beautiful from Nature's own secret places, stood a girl—Maggie—who had come hurrying down the path, and now stood still from sheer astonishment.

He, too, stood still, forgetting everything—fatigue, mud, loneliness—forgetting where he was, why he had come; forgetting all the rules and the fetters of daily life and civilisation; forgetting the existence of Poppy, of every woman on earth except this one, this lovely apparition of the wood, whose eloquent eyes met his, so that for two breathless moments they stood absorbed in each other. Maggie was the first to remember where she was, and what was happening. She had known him almost instantly; but never before in her life had

she met a man of Arthur's kind and appearance, and the fascinated, amazed admiration in those beautiful brown eyes of his held her speechless. Then a sudden confusion turned her pale cheeks pink; her eyes fell, and she was passing quickly on when Arthur took his hat off and spoke in his gentlest, politest tones:

"Would you be so very good as to tell me if this is the right way to Bryans Court?"

Maggie would not look at him again. Her heart was beating violently, and she felt herself trembling from head to foot with a sensation she did not the least understand. She pointed along the path without speaking.

Arthur, though he turned that way, still looked at her, and with increasing curiosity now that his first surprise was past. Who could she be? She was well-dressed; her simplicity had an elegance of its own; yet there was something unconventional, something village-like, in the little red shawl which was thrown round her shoulders. It was very becoming, quite as much so as her round straw hat with the red ribbon, but more puzzling and unusual. With a sudden wish to make her speak, Arthur hastened to say:

"Thank you. But is it quite easy? I can't lose my way, can I? I am afraid I have made some mistake. Have I any business here?"

"Oh, yes," said the girl, recovering herself.

Her eyes began to laugh. Arthur, who had half expected that the sound of her voice would bring disenchantment, listened to its pretty tones with a new fascination.

"This is a short cut to the house," she went on; "but it is not very much used—at least——"

"You use it?"

"I? Oh, yes; of course. You can't possibly lose your way. Follow this path, and it brings you out into the avenue; then you see the house to your right, on the top of the hill."

"Thank you so much. I had puzzled out my way from the station, and began to fear I had gone wrong."

"Ah, well, your best way would have been to keep straight on up the hill instead of turning along the village. The Court gates are not far beyond the Rector's house—over there—and then you have the whole approach by the avenue, which is lovely."

"Still, this path has its charms," said

Arthur, lingering. "The Rector's house, then—Mr. Cantillon's—it is not very near the church."

"No, it is not the real Rectory." She hesitated a moment and then went on, with a secret, desperate resolve to be quite natural. "We ought not to be strangers, perhaps. I am sure you are Captain Nugent."

Her tone and manner at this moment were so pretty, so refined, that Arthur was more puzzled than ever. A moment ago he had decided that she was a farmer's daughter, the belle of the village, and a lucky village too. Now he thought he was making some monstrous mistake. She was a friend of Poppy's, staying at the Court. Perhaps even a cousin, a lovely poor relation. His manner and looks were a good deal more guarded, as well as a little embarrassed, when he spoke again:

"Yes, I am. I ran down unexpectedly. And you—forgive me, I'm very ignorant—you are Miss Latimer's friend—I didn't know you were staying here."

"I'm not. I live in the village," Maggie answered. "I am her friend, Maggie Farrant. You may have heard my name."

"Oh, of course!"

He remembered now that Poppy had talked about some girl in the village. He almost thought, his ideas waking up slowly, that he had listened lazily one day to a conversation between his mother and Miss Fanny Latimer—something about Thorne, the artist, marrying somebody. This was probably the girl. It seemed an injury, an absurdity, that no one had thought it worth while to mention the girl's wonderful beauty. That stodge of an artist! Excellent fellow, but how could he ever appreciate such a girl as this?

"By Jove, she is lovely!" he said to himself.

Maggie thought his manner a little stiff and shy. It made her feel as if she had perhaps been too forward in recognising him, and for a moment she wished herself away. He hardly looked at her now.

"Shall I find Miss Latimer in the house, do you think?" he said quietly. "You have just been there?"

"No, I haven't," Maggie answered. "I thought she would come to me to-day, so I just ran from our garden along this path to see if she was coming. But I didn't see her, so I came back. I dare say you will find her in the house. Good-bye."

With a quick little bend of her head she was gone. Arthur lifted his hat mechanically. He was beginning to speak, but the girl's light figure was out of sight in an instant, even her footsteps unheard on the soft moss. He was alone once more in the wood.

A little while later, Poppy, hurrying home with a puzzled mind, found him strolling with her aunt in the garden.

Her welcome ought to have been enough to satisfy any man. Aunt Fanny walked discreetly away among the flower-beds, and in the shade of a great cedar Arthur held Poppy in his arms and kissed her sweet face.

"Arthur, you look sad," she whispered. "You are tired, dear."

"How could I be sad! And what are those things on your eyelashes?"

"Oh, it is only that I am too happy," she said, laughing, for it was true that two absurd tears had to be brushed away. "Tell me, do you like Bryans?"

Arthur's eyes rested on hers a moment, then wandered round over green lawns and golden sunlit trees, and the solid walls of her old home.

"Perfect," he said. "I knew it would be like this. It is just like you."

METZ.

METZ is not a cheerful city. From all accounts, it was rich, and strong, and lively before the Franco-Prussian War. But after the signing of the capitulation on October the twenty-seventh, 1870, a new era began for it. Many of the leading merchants straightway deserted their native place. They could not endure being under German rule. The siege itself had cost them some pangs. From M. Maréchal, the worthy mayor of the city, downwards in grade, all the Metzgers had done their best to protract the fatal day. They would gladly have struggled along on a ration of but two hundred grammes of bread daily and a morsel of shrivelled horse-flesh, if thus they could have kept their city for France. As it was, the bread ration got to three hundred grammes; which was small enough, considering that a fifth of the substance was mere bran, and the whole was a soft, doughy material, ill apt to fortify the weakened constitutions of the inhabitants. But the army under Bazaine wrecked all their hopes and made their hardships of no avail. On the twenty-

ninth of October, the Prussians marched stolidly into the old city and took possession of the civic coffers, the arms and ammunition, and all else worth formal appropriation. This was the inevitable prologue to the subsequent desertion of Metz by its most eminent manufacturers.

Nowadays, once past the stiff-built sentries who guard the gates into the city, you soon realise that little of the Gallic spirit is left in Metz. Twenty thousand soldiers are hived here. You come across mighty barracks in every quarter. There are miles of them and of the low red-roofed buildings within which are stored hundreds of tons of grain and other provisions. It will be odd if, in crossing the Place Royale, you do not get mixed up with a battalion or two of German troops marching from one barrack to another. There is all the difference in the world between their style of movement and that of French troops. The latter go loosely, with swinging arms and cracking jests, which send undissembled laughter far down the lines. But the Germans are the stereotyped soldiers of the nursery toy-boxes: rigid and silent, a hundred tread and move like one. Their very noses—of no artistic shape, be it said—are all carried at the same angle.

Curious, to the stranger, are the comments which the appearance of the soldiers in possession excites from the casual guests at the beer-halls which look upon the Place Royale. The guests will be about equally divided between the two nationalities. Of these, the French contingent watch the troops with smiles of contempt, which do not fall now and then to irritate their Teuton neighbours. When they talk of them they do not shrink from expressing their opinion that the German rank-and-file are a despicable set of clodhoppers, without mind or soul. Such as they are, they were good enough to win their way to Paris in 1870. But that was due to the demerits of the French leaders; it will be different the next time. Man for man, say these native-born guests in the beer-halls, there can be no doubt that the French soldier is the superior of his German rival.

The German toppers, on the other hand, find the spectacle extremely elevating. They broaden their very square shoulders to the utmost and finger their moustaches, while from their pipes proceed puff after puff of tobacco smoke, which forms in the air the words echoing in their minds: "What a fine nation is ours, to be sure!"

If the French think they will ever regain Metz, they are profoundly in error!" Anon the same sentiments actually escape their lips. Nor do they restrain their voices out of chivalrous regard for the Frenchmen hard by, to whom the German Eagle is an execrable bird.

The military spirit rules in Metz as hardly anywhere else in Europe. If, on rising in the morning, you look from your hotel bedroom upon any of the public squares, you will see men in uniform striding to and fro with folios under their arms. The sun glints upon their helmets. They are mere underlings carrying reports and order books to the apartments of the officers; but how proud they seem of themselves and their cargo! If you accost one of them—you, manifestly a civilian—he will turn upon you a gaze that is meant to be haughty, but is in fact merely farcical in its boorish insolence. Nothing can be less conciliatory than the deportment of these men. Politeness is not inborn in them, and they have no chance of acquiring the talent.

Ere you are half-dressed the clatter of horses makes itself heard on the cobbles of the square. These are the steeds of the officers. They are brought to the doors of the houses, and the orderly stands at the animal's head with his thumb stuck out, waiting for the moment when the Major or the Captain—whom you can see at his toilet—shall descend and acknowledge his clock-work salutation. Perchance, in the interval, a brown-eyed little servant-maid of Lorraine comes forth from the next door and pretends to clean the bell-handle and other brass-work. Clearly this is the soldier's opportunity for a little honest recreation. The brown eyes look kindly at him, for though he is an enemy he has a splendid chest, and, moreover, the girl was born two or three years after the Germanisation of Metz. Perhaps a few slight feats of coquetry ensue; but they rather mystify than delight the warrior. He continues to stand with his thumbs stuck out and glancing nearly in a straight line with his nose until he hears his captain's martial clank on the stairs, and realises that his ordeal with the brown-eyed little vixen is at an end.

If I cross the road to look at the literature in this or that book-shop of the city, ten to one three parts of the books in the window are on the tiresome subjects of strategy or tactics in the field, campaigns in every century, and memoirs of the

Franco-Prussian War by combatants of different grades. Maps are displayed with a good deal of assumption. But they are all concerned with the historic siege of which Germany is so proud.

It is the same in the photographers' shops. Infinite is the number of capped and besworded warriors who stare from the windows upon a world which must get mortally weary of them. They are shown in troops, as well as singly. The background of a beer-hall, with incidental adornments of foaming mugs and cups, adds to the grace of the pictures. A hearty race of round-cheeked, full-lipped men, with chests upon which you might build a house; but for all that very monotonous to behold, and not nearly as interesting as the fair ladies with which other photographers, in towns unfortified by Vauban and not "full of powder"—so a German officer described Metz to me—are content to beautify their windows.

The wonder is that the military mania in Metz has not gone a little farther, and that all the householders and tram men are not soldiers in mufti. The ticket-offices at the railway stations are in the hands of German damsels, who do not treat a strange accent with much civility. It seems as if they, at any rate, have contracted the all-prevailing tone of military brusqueness, suspicion, and brevity.

But, though it has already done much, the spirit of Germanisation in Metz has not yet been able to eliminate the French tone entirely from the city. There are quarters, notably in the older parts, where one sees few or no Teuton names over the bowed shop-windows, some of which have been witnesses of worse sieges than that of 1870. They are ramshackle, irregular houses, and their occupants are like unto them. If the momentary outburst of red republicanism during the siege of 1870 had gained anything of a footing, it is from these purlieus of Metz that the supporters of the cause would have come. As it was, however, the city endured its miseries in an honourable manner. Nor was it the fault of the indigent inhabitants that the capitulation was hastened by one single hour.

Here, too, the mortality in September and October, 1870, was most heavy, after that of the ambulance stations. It could hardly have been otherwise. The people had indifferent water to drink—the purer sources of Gorze having been severed—the bread was bad, the meat and broth came

from famished horses too weak to walk to the slaughter-houses, there was such a deficiency of salt that it rose to ten and twelve francs a pound, and the air was poisoned with the fumes of typhoid which soon got a terrible grip of the town. During the later months of 1870, no fewer than a tenth of the poor of Metz found their way to the cemetery of the Chambière Island.

Bazaine's eight-score thousand soldiers and the richer citizens did what they could for their poorer brethren. But it was not very much. A collection was made, and with the hundred thousand francs thus obtained, oil, rice, sugar, and broth were distributed in small quantities where they were most needed. Horseflesh, also, was allotted to them gratis—at first of the lowest quality, subsequently of a better kind. Firewood, a most rare commodity, was only available in cases of extreme necessity. They held out as best they could; but even after the siege, when charitable associations from England, Belgium, and elsewhere were pouring their cargoes of nutritious things into the city, they continued to die in disproportionate numbers in consequence of their privations.

The Chambière Island, which includes the north of Metz, is an interesting part of the city. The main stream of the Moselle flows to the west of it, and a branch loops round it on the east. Under the German rule it serves as an admirable exercise ground for the military. Here, too, in long rows, are the granaries, which have been designed to keep the city from being starved into a surrender by any sudden renewal of hostilities between the two Powers. On certain blank spaces you may see low-lying stones inscribed with the simple words, "Respect to the dead!" There is no indication as to the quality of these dead. They may have been French or German soldiers, or the paupers of Metz; or they may even have lain here since the siege of 1814, when more than ten thousand men and women died in the hospitals, mainly through overcrowding.

On this island the chief hospital of 1870 did admirable work through the siege. It was designed and built in about a month, and had an average population of about two thousand soldiers until the end of the siege. Thanks to the sanitary and other precautions, typhus paid no visit to the Polygone, as the hospital was called. It carried off about seventeen hundred people elsewhere within the city gates; but the

wisdom of the architects and the airiness of the site kept the invalids of the island hospital exempt.

Right at the extremity of the island, where the two streams reunite, Metz's cemetery is situated. It is cheek by jowl with a neat, compact little circular earth-work, provided with moat, guns, and sentries. Beyond are the wooded hills towards Thionville, and the villages of the north-east. The Prussians held these heights and villages to within a respectable distance of Fort St. Julien. Now and again—though far too infrequently to satisfy the impetuous Metzers—Bazaine ordered a sortie against the enemy. But his efforts to cut a road to the north were futile; and they only resulted in recruits for the Polygone and other ambulances, and in more graves in the cemetery.

It was from the many villages in the neighbourhood that the peasants flocked into the city when the almost incredible news of the defeat of the French armies in the east reached them. They trooped through the gates in embarrassing crowds, not always with much in their hands, or in the carts which accompanied them. Thus the population was soon raised from forty-eight thousand to seventy thousand. When Bazaine's army of about one hundred and sixty thousand came to be added to the other mouths which had to be fed, it was clear to the corporation of the city that unless a successful sortie were made, and that speedily, starvation would bring Metz to the feet of Von Moltke long ere its proper time.

That was, in fact, what happened. There were provisions, though in no great quantities, in the forts of St. Quentin, Queuleu, and St. Julien, at the capitulation. But it was of no use for the big guns of these mighty fortresses to attempt any longer to defend a city which had not two days' rations of bread left in it.

In the middle of the beautiful old stained window to the right of the east end in the Cathedral of Metz, the words "Esperance Avoir" may be read as part of the ancient device. The window, like its neighbours, dates from the beginning of the sixteenth century. Some of its ruby and mellow purple hues are lovely in the extreme. I know nothing of the history of the windows, except that they are nearly four hundred years old. But this motto, "Be hopeful," has no doubt gone significantly to the hearts of the Metzers in more than one crisis. In 1870

the French Government did not even suppose that this strong place would be assailed by the enemy. During the earlier days of the blockade the Metzgers themselves did not take it seriously. They did what they could for the wounded, who were brought in by the scores of waggon-loads, and confidently awaited the coming of MacMahon. When MacMahon should appear from the south or the west, then the Prussians would doubtless take to their heels and scuttle back across the frontier over which they had had the impudence to tread. But MacMahon came not, and Bazaine stayed comparatively inactive. The Mayor and the Town Council sat daily in consideration of the matter of supplies. The officers of the army bought a deal more things from the provision shops than seemed necessary for their support during the few days or a week or two of their anticipated rest after the fatigues of Gravelotte and Rezonville. There were no new stores to replace those which were thus withdrawn from the warehouses. At length decrees were issued about bread and horseflesh; and then the people understood with what they were threatened.

But towards the close of October, these words "Avoir Espérance" on the fair chancel window of the Cathedral must have seemed very illusory to the worshippers in the grand old building. Outside a lean and woebegone populace, with spectral horses being supported on their way to the butcheries, funeral processions, and camps of the wounded and fever-stricken in every public square. Cold weather, with unusually heavy rain, did not add to their enlivenment. At the Polygone hospital the mud was more than ankle-deep for a long time. Fuel was nearly as scarce as beefsteaks. The music of the cannon from the forts and the answering guns of the enemy had lost their interest to the people. These were too listless to care to perch on the high places in and near the city to watch the puffs of smoke and listen to the reports.

From their own army rumours of the impending disaster had already begun to circulate. The authorities had tried to pave the way by hinting at the likelihood of a bombardment of the city. The firemen were summoned and exercised that they might be prepared for their work. The fire-engines were set in the public places, and tanks of water were got ready. It was an absurd piece of chicanery.

Until the outer forts had yielded, Metz was never likely to be reduced to fear of this kind. But for the moment it seemed to influence some—not many—of the citizens. Better a capitulation than that their fine old city should be shattered to pieces, and they with it.

The civic leaders protested in vain against the negotiations which were in movement between Bazaine and the enemy. They would willingly have pushed the siege up to the point at which all the weakly ones would have died inevitably. This, too, not from bravado, recklessness, and indifference to the sufferings of others, but from patriotism alone. Yet it was no use. "The torture of ignorance, doubt, and powerlessness—such was our lot during the weary weeks of the siege which eventuated in our ruin." So said one of the citizens as the mouthpiece of many.

Thus, on the twenty-ninth of October, the Prussians entered the city which had so well withstood them. They were as eager at the end of the siege as the Metzgers were disconsolate. Many of them had not slept in a bed for two months.

He must be a shrewd prophet who can foretell when the streets and forts of Metz will retake to themselves their old names.

THE STORY OF SOME OLD MONOPOLIES.

THE thoughtful student of the commercial history of our country cannot fail to be impressed with the truth of the proverb that there is nothing new under the sun. We hear comment, for instance, on "corners," and "rings," and "syndicates," and on "bulling" and "bearing," as if these were modern inventions—as if, indeed, the "corner" were an ingenious American "notion" imported across the Atlantic for the discomfiture of innocent Britons. But the modern "corner" is just a nineteenth century version of the seventeenth century monopoly.

Again, we discuss the causes and conditions of the depression of trade, and appoint a Royal Commission to investigate the subject, as if it were a novel branch of political study. So long ago as 1620—and we are not sure that even that was the first public enquiry of the kind—a Royal Commission of twelve was appointed to investigate the causes of the decay of trade. They did investigate and report

from time to time, and one of the results of their suggestions was the appointment of a Standing Committee, or Commission, on Trade, to keep permanent watch over the commerce of the country, to report periodically to Parliament, and to suggest remedies whenever they had any to suggest.

This Commission was appointed in 1622, and it has a special bearing upon our present subject, because among the numerous matters which were referred to it for consideration were: whether the ordinances of the merchant-adventurers and other societies of merchants and handicraftsmen unduly raised the price of woollen cloth; how far the trading companies acted as a restraint on trade; the advisability of meeting the wishes of outsiders by making trade more free and open; the best means of achieving this object with a due regard to the necessary regulation of trade; and how far joint-stock companies were beneficial or otherwise. Currency, shipping, and the navigation laws were also referred to this Commission, which thus seems to have been charged with the investigation of matters which recent Parliaments have divided among a whole series of Royal Commissions, as well as with an enquiry analogous to that recently instituted in America into the operations of trusts and syndicates.

Yet all this was two hundred and seventy years ago. Then, as now, our trade was declared by pessimists to be vanishing away, and our commercial extinction to be imminent. Then, as now, the country was "going to the dogs." It has been going for centuries, and the dogs must be rather weary of waiting.

Let us take a look at some of the old monopolies and trading privileges, which peculiarly marked the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. They began in the latter part of the sixteenth century, and attained their full height and most oppressive influence under good Queen Bess, who had a pretty taste for trade, as well as for gallant gentlemen-adventurers. Now, monopoly, as defined by old McCulloch, is "a grant from the Crown, or other competent authority, conveying to some one individual the sole right of buying, selling, making, importing, exporting, etc., some one commodity or set of commodities," and the House of Stuart have been commonly regarded as, if not the parents, at least the perpetrators, of the grossest of the monopolies.

Monopolies were quite common in England, however, long before the days of the Stuarts, while it was under a Stuart, James the First, that an Act was passed declaring void all monopolies for the sole buying, selling, and making of goods, excepting patents for fourteen years for any new process or new manufacture. This, indeed, was the first step towards Free Trade, but we are more concerned just now with the events which led to it. The Tudors were really the great creators of monopolies, and Elizabeth was the greatest developer of them.

Hallam records that all through the sixteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth century, patents to deal exclusively in particular articles were granted so lavishly to the courtiers that hardly a commodity remained free. Even salt, leather, and coal were the subjects of patents, the list of which, when read over in Parliament in 1601, was so long that a Member asked incredulously, "Is not bread among the number?"

The practice was for the favoured courtiers to sell their patents of monopoly to companies of merchants—or syndicates, as we should call them nowadays—to work them. Rival political parties struggled, not to redress the grievances under which the people groaned, but to obtain a share of the profits. If Essex held a monopoly of sweet wine, Raleigh held one of cards; indeed, it is hard to say how many "patents" either of them held from first to last.

It has been said by Macaulay that some of the most odious of the patents of monopoly passed the Great Seal while it was in charge of Lord Bacon, including that granted to Sir Giles Mompesson and to Sir Francis Mitchell (immortalised by Massinger as Sir Giles Overreach and Justice Greedy), for the exclusive manufacture of gold and silver lace. This patent is characterised by the historian as the most disgraceful in our history, not only because it covered spurious manufacture and fraudulent dealing, but also because the patentees were armed with unprecedented and scandalous powers which enabled them to invade the sanctity of homes, and to arrest persons alleged to be interlopers in the trade. The shameful manner in which such powers could be exercised can be well imagined. Bacon was not only a party to the granting of this patent, but also a strong supporter of the patentees and a protector of their rights, when these were assailed. Macaulay infers that Bacon

was the creature of Buckingham in the matter of this and other patents, and that "certain of the house of Villiers were to go shares with Overreach and Greedy in the plunder of the public." Other writers exonerate Bacon from the graver charge, and credit him only with the desire to preserve the Royal Prerogative, and in a letter to Essex, who, as has been said, held a monopoly of sweet wines, Bacon advised him to have nothing to do with monopolies, "or any oppressions."

The curious thing is that while it was contrary to common law to grant a monopoly to any person of the sole right of buying, selling, making, or using anything in hindrance of the lawful trade of any other person, it was the acknowledged, or at all events the unquestioned, right of the Sovereign to make a special grant for a specified time of special privileges. One of the earliest recorded exercises of this prerogative is that of a grant to one Peter de Perariis, in exchange for a payment of twenty marks, of the sole right to sell "salt fishes." This grant takes us away back to the twelfth century. Then it is to be remembered that to the special privileges granted by Edward the Third to the Flemish weavers we owe the naturalisation of the woollen industry in this country.

Indeed, bad and indefensible as the system of monopolies was, the genesis of many of our present leading industries may be traced to them—just as the foundation of our present enormous foreign commerce may be traced in the operations of the great chartered Trading Companies, who enjoyed monopolies of trade with certain regions.

Thus, one of the first patents granted by Elizabeth was to two merchants of Antwerp, Anthony Dollyne and John Carye, for the making of glass. The patent was for twenty-one years, and under its protection glass-makers were brought from the Vosges, and a regular manufacture established in England, which was only suspended by a difficulty about fuel.

In the same way another patent granted to foreigners for wire-drawing by machinery, was the beginning of the great industry in wire-working. And in 1588 Sir John Spielman erected a paper-mill at Dartmouth, and received the honour of knighthood from the Queen, as the pioneer of paper-making in this country, conducting his operations under a license, which gave him the monopoly of "the sole gathering of all rags and other

articles necessary for making paper" for ten years.

Mr. Stephen Dowell, the author of "The History of Taxation and Taxes," says that no great amount of revenue accrued to the Crown from the granting of these monopolies, a statement which is repeated by Mr. Hewins in his little work on "English Trade and Finance in the Seventeenth Century." But this is by no means beyond doubt. We have seen what has been suggested of the gold-lace monopoly, and the case of Alderman Abell and Richard Kilvert in the time of Charles the First seems to tell another story. These worthies obtained from the King an exclusive patent for the sale of wine, and their dealings were the subject of a special enquiry by the House of Commons, which resulted in the discovery that they "deceived the King of" a matter of fifty-seven thousand pounds, for which they were severely punished.

To come back to more justifiable monopolies, it would seem that we owe the foundation of the manufacture of sail-cloth—a business before 1590 wholly in the hands of the French—to a patent for "pouldavie" granted by Elizabeth. Then in the time of Charles the First a patent granted to Sir Robert Maunsell for the manufacture of glass seems to have revived a suspended industry; and another to Lord Digby for smelting iron with coal, was the beginning of a new era in our national trade.

In Charles the First's time, too, an ingenious attempt was made by the formation of corporations to evade the law against monopolies passed in the reign of James the First—a law, however, which excepted newly invented manufactures and arts not practised before in the country. Thus the Corporation of Soap-boilers was formed, and obtained a patent from the King, on a payment of ten thousand pounds and the promise to pay a duty of eight pounds per ton on all soap manufactured. This was ordained as "for the well-ordering of the making of soft soap"; but really in order to help the King's finances, and to enrich the monopolists.

The monopoly which aroused the strongest opposition in the time of Elizabeth was that for the manufacture and sale of salt, whereby the price of that necessary was enormously raised. Next only to this in point of hardship were accounted the monopolies for the selling of salt-fish and the making of vinegar. Other monopolies were for currants, iron, powder, cards, ox-shin bones,

train-oil, leather, certain cloth fabrics, pot-ashes, aniseed, sea-coal, steel, aqua-vitæ (a monopoly of Drake's, by the way); brushes, pots, saltpetre, lead, oil, dice, calamin-stone, dried pilchards, tobacco pipes, bottles, starch, and many others. In the time of King James the monopolies accounted the most oppressive were those on gold-lace and silver-lace (already referred to), inns, and ale-houses. The list was increased by Charles under various pretexts, so that there was point in the attack which Culpepper made on the monopolists in the Long Parliament, in 1610. "These men," he said, "like the frogs of Egypt, have gotten possession of our dwellings, and we have scarce a room free from them. They sup in our cup, they dip in our dish, they sit by our fire; we find them in the dye-vat, the wash-bowls, and the powdering-tub; they share with the butler in his box; they have marked and scaled us from head to foot. They have a vizard to hide the brand made by that good law in the last Parliament of King James; they shelter themselves under the name of a Corporation; they make bye-laws which serve their turn to squeeze us and fill their purposes." Is not this precisely what is complained of to-day in certain trusts and syndicates in America?

To return, however, to the grant of patents of monopoly in what have become great industries. One of these, about 1604, was to the Earl of Sheffield for the sole manufacture of alum in Yorkshire. This was a case, however, in which monopoly did not ensure profit; for after working some time Lord Sheffield and his partners found that they had lost over thirty thousand pounds—an immense sum in those days—and needed more capital. They got some, and also obtained an extension of their monopoly to all Great Britain and Ireland. Still they lost money—another forty thousand pounds—and, as the chronicler quaintly hath it, "no allomes made to benefit, although the price was raised at a certaintie, and all foreign allomes prohibited to come in." The industry struggled along, however, and ultimately acquired considerable dimensions. It still survives, we believe, even unto this day, in Yorkshire, but has become of more importance in other parts of the country.

The price "was raised at a certaintie" in the case of alum, as we see; but this was not so serious a matter as artificially raising the prices of salt, tin, stone and glass bottles, and other articles in common

use. It was stated, when the agitation against monopolies was taken up with vigour, that they had raised the price of steel from twopence halfpenny to fivepence per pound, and thereby destroyed the trade of all edge-tool makers; had doubled the price of stone bottles; raised glasses from one shilling and fourpence to five shillings a dozen, and the price of starch from eighteen shillings to fifty-six shillings.

This was before the famous Statute of Monopolies of 1624, which is regarded as the basis of our present patent laws; but even after the passing of this Act monopolies continued, as we have seen, although arbitrarily and illegally. The granting of these monopolies was one of the grievances enumerated in the Remonstrance presented to King Charles in 1640, when the Lords prayed him to summon a Parliament.

Gerard Malynes, a writer on economics of the first quarter of the seventeenth century, defined a monopoly as "a kind of commerce in buying, selling, changing, or bartering, usurped by a few, and sometimes but by one person, and forestalled from all others to his or theirs privet gaine, and to the hurt and detriment of other men; whereby of course, or by authoritie, the libertie of trade is restrained from others, whereby the monopolist is enabled to set the price of commodities at his pleasure." But he divided monopolies into three classes, viz, Reasonable, which included such things and trifles "as are a pleasure," as starch, cards, lute-strings, tobacco; Unreasonable, such as butter, cheese, flesh, fish, and necessaries of life; Indifferent, velvets and silks, sugar, spices, and other delicacies and dainties not necessary to life.

Another writer, Roger Coke, defended, or rather justified, the granting of monopolies in the case of such luxuries as French, Spanish, and Italian wines and brandy, foreign fruits, and all sorts of lace, fine linen and ribbons, etc., on the ground that such luxuries impoverish a nation and are best restricted to a few.

We have seen how some patents resulted in the founding of great industries, and we are about to mention another instance, but it is also the case that some of these old patents retarded the development of an industry. Thus the steel monopoly, granted by James to Sir Basil Burke, did not help the development of the manufacture. The patent was afterwards cancelled, and a new patent was granted to a Frenchman, who really started the industry in this country some time later.

An eventful patent was one which formed the foundation of the Staffordshire iron trade.

In the beginning of the seventeenth century iron in this country was smelted with charcoal, and it was estimated by a writer of the time that there were some eight hundred furnaces and forges at work in 1612. These were chiefly in Sussex, Surrey, Kent, Monmouth, and the Forest of Dean; but the industry was beginning to make way also in Yorkshire, Nottinghamshire, and Staffordshire. The manufacture, indeed, was extending so much that general fears were entertained that the demand for charcoal was destined to destroy the woods and forests of the country. About this time a German began to use coal in the smelting of iron, and in 1612 Simon Sturtevant applied for and obtained a patent to use the same process in England. He was not successful, however, and others who attempted to follow his lead in Yorkshire and elsewhere, also failed to make anything of it.

Then in 1619 Lord Dudley began to make experiments with coal at his iron-works at Pensnett, in Worcestershire, and found he could work more profitably than with charcoal, which was becoming scarce and dear. He secured a patent of monopoly, and rapidly increased his output so that he was able to sell pig-iron for four pounds per ton, while charcoal-iron makers required six pounds; and bar-iron for twelve pounds, while the others asked eighteen pounds. This brought upon him the opposition of "the trade," who endeavoured to get Dudley's patent barred under the Statute of Monopolies. But Dudley's influence was strong, and he obtained exception from the Act. New furnaces were erected near the coal-pits at Sedgely, which were attacked by a rabble. In fact, there was opposition at every turn, and the patent was lost during the Civil War, but it had served its turn, and the smelting and manufacture of iron with coal instead of wood was an established industry from which much of the general prosperity of the country has sprung.

As the supply of wood failed in Kent, and Sussex, and Surrey, the trade moved to the Forest of Dean and Staffordshire, where was plenty of coal, and from which the rough metal was sent up to Stourbridge, and Walsall, and Wolverhampton, and Birmingham, to be made into hardware.

This is but just one example of how

industrial revolution may begin. It may be said, of course, that Dudley's iron patent was not to be ranked among the monopolies which formed the grievances of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, as being rather a protection of inventive enterprise than of privilege. But nevertheless it was denounced as among those monopolies which were declared to "invade the liberty of the land, and to intrench on the native commodities of the kingdom." It is needless, however, to break a lance with the old controversialists. Our object has been merely to show how good may sometimes spring out of abuses, and that there were different kinds of monopolies. No one would nowadays attempt to defend such a monopoly as the East India Company enjoyed for centuries in the trade of India and China. But John Company's monopoly, wrong in principle and improper in practice as it was, has served to endow us with an Indian Empire.

VALENTINE FORSYTH'S HARVEST.

A COMPLETE STORY.

CHAPTER I.

VALENTINE FORSYTH was Commissioner of Police at the Diamond Fields, and he had just returned from a visit to Graham's Town, bringing a young wife back with him, greatly to the astonishment of his numerous friends and acquaintances.

"Fancy old Val falling a victim!" said Terence O'Brien, as he lounged on the verandah of the Kimberley Club; "such a wideawake fellow as he always seemed! I can't understand it."

"Don't try to, Terry; it might be too much for you, especially with the thermometer at eighty in the shade," said another man languidly.

"And such a simple little thing as she looked, too," went on Terry, not heeding the interruption; "all bread and butter, and white muslin and blue sash—figuratively, of course, I mean."

"Don't trouble to explain yourself. We understand those beautiful flowers of speech which spring from your too fervid Irish fancy. That is the only thing Ireland suffers from in my opinion—too much imagination."

"Oh, drop it, Graham," murmured an exhausted-looking youth, one of the pillars of the Civil Service, who had just looked

in from an afternoon spent in a hot, stuffy Court, interpreting native evidence, and who noticed the flash that sprang to O'Brien's eyes. "This isn't the time to discuss politics. Did either of you fellows look at Val just now?"

"I was too much occupied with the bride," said Terry, who recovered his temper as quickly as he lost it. "She had a nice little face of her own. I shall make a point of calling early."

"Yes, I looked at the deluded creature," said the man who had been called Graham, as he took a deep draught of iced whisky-and-soda, "and I never saw a man look so idiotically happy. Why, when he turned round for a moment as they drove past, he positively beamed," and he emptied his glass with an expression of utter disgust.

"Yes, so he did," said the Civil Service youth with a giggle. "And old Val, too, who never did such a thing as laugh! Why, that weary smile of his would have done for one of Ouida's heroes."

"Ah, well, another good man gone wrong; let's go and knock the balls about a bit while we chant a 'De Profundis' over him. I'm sick of watching the dust flying down the road, and dinner's not to be thought of yet for another hour."

"I'm not so sure," said Terry musingly, when the two men had taken themselves off to the billiard-room, and he was left alone. "I'm not so sure that it's a bad thing to be married in a place like this. Since I came up here I've been losing my native modesty with startling rapidity. With such a free-and-easy lot, St. Kevin himself wouldn't stand a chance. And that reminds me—I wonder how the Borlase will take this? Whew!" and he gave a low, prolonged whistle.

Meanwhile Valentine Forsyth and his young wife had arrived at their destination, a house on the outskirts of the town, standing in a dusty compound, surrounded by a corrugated iron fence, which shone with painful brilliance in the sun.

When he left for his holiday he had had no intention of returning a married man, or even an engaged one, although he had met Angela Ward before, and been strongly attracted by her. The second meeting intensified the impression left by the first, and the calm, impassive man, carried out of himself by this new, strange passion that held him in its thrall, did his wooing in so gentle and tender, yet masterful, a fashion, that his bride was won

before she had scarcely realised her danger. Mrs. Ward was reluctant to part with her only child, especially in so hasty a fashion, but Valentine eventually succeeded in overcoming all obstacles. How could he manage to exist for a year without Angela? He could not expect any more leave for another twelve months. Why could they not have a quiet little wedding now—he did not want any fuss—and go back to Kimberley together? And when Mrs. Ward, as a last resource, asked where he was going to take Angela—she could hardly share his bachelor quarters at the Club—he triumphantly settled that question by saying that he knew of a house that would just suit them, and he was only waiting for her consent to write to his old friend, Dr. Stannard, to take it and get it properly furnished for him.

"Angela won't mind things being a little upside down," he said, looking at her tenderly; "we shall have plenty of time to put them straight later on."

And Angela seemed perfectly content.

"But," remarked Mrs. Ward, recognising that she had better give in with a good grace, and liking Valentine Forsyth for his own sake, and aware that he would be a good match for her daughter, "have you not any lady friend who would manage this for you? It seems more a woman's work than a man's—the furnishing part, at all events."

"Oh, I dare say there are plenty of ladies in Kimberley who would be kind enough to arrange everything for me," he said, with the ghost of a smile, "but I think I'd rather ask old Jim Stannard than any one else."

So it happened that when, after a brief honeymoon, Valentine brought his wife to her new home—which rejoiced in the misnomer of the Retreat, for it stood almost on the high-road, with the bare veldt on one side, and with nothing but two or three sickly lime-trees behind which it could make any pretence of "retreating"—it showed rather forcibly the lack of a woman's hand in the interior arrangements.

For a moment, perhaps, contrasting it with the dainty little home of her girlhood, Angela may have been smitten with dismay, but if so she recovered herself almost immediately; and when Dr. Stannard, who had stood ready to welcome them as they drove up, apologised humbly for all the shortcomings, saying that he was only an unfortunate bachelor and had not had

much experience in such matters, she smiled upon him so prettily as she gave him her hand and thanked him for all the trouble he had taken, that he forgave her on the spot for having robbed him of his old chum, and took up the cudgels warmly on her behalf when his lady patients put him through a severe cross-examination the next morning.

"And you think you'll be able to make yourself happy here, darling?" asked Valentine when, dinner over, the doctor had said good night, and he was lying on the verandah on a rug of jackal-skins at the feet of his young wife. "I'm afraid you'll find it very different from your quiet life at Graham's Town."

"Of course I shall be happy here, you ridiculous boy; are not you here? And I shall enjoy a little life and gaiety after leading the existence of a country mouse. You will see, sir, in course of time, your wife may become one of the leaders of Kimberley society."

"The saints forefend!" ejaculated Valentine, looking up with an expression of half real, half comic dismay. It was rather a weary-looking face as a rule, lit up only by a pair of brilliant blue-grey eyes, but to-night it was so softened and beautified by the magic of a pure, absorbing love, that his old friends would scarcely have known it. "Let me keep my little white violet from struggling among those full-blown roses. You may

Give to a few friends hand or smile,
Like a generous lady, now and awhile,

but there I draw the line. I have been a wanderer, more or less, all my life, darling," his voice very low and tender, "and I have never known before what it is to have a home—a real home of my own. Let me enjoy it—just you and I together—for a little while."

For answer, with the tears gathering thickly in her eyes, she leant forward, and with a little protecting gesture—that touch of protection which every true woman feels for the man she loves—kissed him softly on the brow.

CHAPTER II.

VALENTINE had been married three months, when, one morning early in December, he sat at breakfast with his wife, discussing an invitation which had just been brought to the house by one of Judge Borlase's Kaffir boys.

The heat was already intense, although

it was only eight o'clock, and the breakfast-table had been carried into a shady corner of the verandah, where the lattice-work was covered with creepers and sheltered them from the gaze of the passers-by, and where a little air still relieved the oppressive atmosphere from time to time.

Angela was looking somewhat pale and exhausted as she leant back in a deck-chair, in a white cambric dressing-gown trimmed with a little lace about the throat and round the full sleeves, which fell back and showed the pretty dimpled arms to the elbows. It was the hottest time of the year, and an unusually hot season even for that. The sun blazed away untiringly in a heaven of unclouded blue from the first thing in the morning until just before nightfall, when it dropped with startling rapidity out of sight. Dry, fierce heat and dust storms were the order of the day. Angela sometimes wondered whether there were any use in dusting at all, when, very likely just as it was done, a brown cloud would sweep by and leave nearly a quarter of an inch of fine sand everywhere.

"Suppose we refuse this invitation, darling. You're not looking quite up to the mark, and dancing, with the thermometer somewhere close on a hundred degrees, is next door to madness."

"But this is the first invitation we have had from Mrs. Borlase, Val. You know she has been away. Wouldn't she be offended if we did not go? She and I had quite a long gossip at the Vanderlindes' the other day, and she told me what great friends you and she had always been, and that she hoped very much I should like her too. She looked so pretty and sweet when she said it that I took quite a fancy to her. I think I should like to go if you don't mind."

"Just as you like, of course, dear. I was only afraid of your being knocked up. You must be very careful now with this hot weather. I don't want you to have an attack of 'camp' fever; and new-comers are very apt to get it, especially at this time of the year."

"Have you ever had it, Val?"

"No; I suppose I was pretty well fever-proof when I arrived here. But you see you are not as tough as I am, and though I don't want to frighten you, I should like you to take life as quietly as possible for the next month or two; then we shall begin to cool down a bit. When you have once had that wretched fever you are always liable to get it again; and if your

mother comes up in the spring, I don't want her to find you reduced to skin and bone. I shouldn't have the courage to look her in the face."

"Well," with a laugh, "I don't think you need be afraid of that; and if you will take me to Mrs. Borlase's, I'll promise to be very good and quiet afterwards."

"All right, darling. When is it—the day after to-morrow? Well, as we are going, you may as well look your best. The Borlase parties are among the most select in Kimberley, I suppose. At all events, there are sure to be some well-dressed women there, and I want my wife to look as good as, or better, than any one else."

"Oh, you vain boy. But I'll do my best. As soon as I have got rid of you I'll have a dress inspection, and arrange my feathers and war-paint."

Valentine was quite satisfied with the result when Angela emerged from her dressing-room on the eventful night and submitted herself to his critical eye for a moment as they stood waiting in the hall for the "spider" to come round. She had put on her wedding dress—a plain white silk, open a little at the neck and trimmed with tiny ostrich feathers, and the long, severe lines showed to advantage her slender figure and gave it dignity as well as grace. Her golden-brown hair was twisted into a coronet on the top of her shapely head, and a diamond star—her husband's wedding gift—glittered among the coils.

"Well, sir, shall I do?" she asked saucily, but a shade of anxiety dimming the brightness of her smiling eyes as Valentine looked at her for a moment without speaking.

"Yes, I think so—I most decidedly think so," he said slowly. "But you are more like a white lily than a violet to-night, and—and I should like to take off that gorgeous gown and see you swinging in the hammock in one of your muslin frocks, and find myself in my arm-chair in my old shooting-jacket, instead of dressed like a mute for a funeral," and he looked at his faultless dress-clothes—which, in spite of his disparaging remark, admirably suited his tall, well-proportioned figure—with an expression of tragic disgust.

"Why, Val, I had no idea you had such an objection to going, or I wouldn't have bothered you about it," she cried penitently. "But you never seemed to mind before. I am so sorry."

"There! I was a brute to fly out like that, sweetheart. I don't know what is the matter with me to-night—liver, I suppose; it's always liver in this confounded climate. Let me put on your cloak; there's the cart coming round. I shall enjoy myself well enough, little one, when I get there, so don't look so serious. You'll see your worthy husband spinning round wildly with the rest of the teetotums, only pausing now and again to surreptitiously wipe his heated brow," and laughing gaily he took his wife's arm and led her down the path.

Judge Borlase's house, which was a Government residence, and replete, as the auctioneers have it, with every modern convenience—or with as many of them at least as were procurable in Kimberley—was on the opposite side of the township, and though the light, two-wheeled cart got over the ground pretty quickly, they were more than half an hour on the road. Angela did not mind that. The drive through the fresh night air was delightful after the heat of the day, for, at least, there is one thing for which the inhabitants of the Fields return fervent thanks, and without which they would inevitably all perish—the nights are cool and refreshing.

As they neared their destination they overtook other carts bound in the same direction as themselves, and exchanged pleasant greetings with most of the occupants, for only in a very few cases, when a lady voluntarily endured martyrdom so as her hair should not get disarranged, was any cart seen with the hood up.

There were about forty people in Mrs. Borlase's pretty drawing-room when Valentine entered with his wife on his arm, and this was nearly the full number, for it was not supposed to be a grand or formal affair, but merely one of the Borlase little parties, which were, and justly, more popular than any other similar gatherings in Kimberley.

Their hostess caught sight of them almost before their name was announced, and advanced to meet them with outstretched hands.

"I am delighted to see you," she said, smiling down on Angela. "I was half afraid whether this awful weather might keep you away. We old inhabitants don't mind it so much, you know; we are sun-dried and hardened."

Angela could not help thinking that Mrs. Borlase had not suffered under the process, as far as her personal appearance,

at all events, was concerned. She was a "daughter of the gods, divinely tall," and if not "divinely fair," she had some very good "points," of which she perfectly understood how to make the most. In her sea-green gown—a Bond Street confection, which put all the other gowns in the room into the shade—and with her lovely white neck and arms, and soft, gliding movements, there was something about her faintly suggestive of a mermaid, or any other fascinating water-nymph.

She introduced her husband—a stately, fine-looking man, considerably her senior, and evidently, though not obtrusively, her most devoted admirer—to Angela, and brought up one or two other gentlemen who, in spite of the heat, were languidly interested in the pretty bride, and anxious to get on terms of intimacy with her before any one else cut them out, for young married women were at a premium in Kimberley, and "girls" were comparatively nowhere; and then, having done her duty, she took Valentine's proffered arm, and went for a tour round the rooms.

"I have had the refreshments put outside to-night in the marquee," she said, pointing to a tent on the lawn hung round with coloured lanterns; "I thought it would be cooler. Come and see what you think of the arrangements."

A little reluctantly, because he could not quite understand his position, and he was, as it were, moving in the dark, Valentine went with his hostess through the open French windows on to the lawn.

Steadily determined to keep to the commonplace, and not to be betrayed into leaving the beaten tracks, he judiciously praised everything, criticising the placing of the rout-seats as though it were a matter of vital importance.

"You see," she said, looking up in his face for the first time, "I have had some little tables and just two chairs put about under the trees for those who prefer to take their supper tête-à-tête. Isn't it considerate of me? But, of course, all that does not interest you—now."

"Of course not," he promptly replied, carefully avoiding the glance of those witching blue eyes. "Am I not an old married man, and therefore set apart from all such vanities?"

"You a married man! It seems so strange," she murmured softly. "I could not believe it when I first heard it."

"There, do you hear? That is your

favourite waltz they are just striking up," he interrupted hastily. "Shall we have a turn, or are you already engaged?" He wanted to get back to the security of the house.

"No," she said; and if she were vexed, she did not show it. She was a wise woman, and knew that everything comes to those who can wait. It is the eager, impulsive creatures, who want to snatch things for themselves, who come off so badly in this world. "No; I make it a rule not to get engaged beforehand at these little informal affairs; then you have the charm of uncertainty, instead of everything cut and dried on a programme."

They were the most distinguished-looking and the most graceful couple in the room. Their steps suited to perfection; as, indeed, how should they not, considering how often they had floated round in each other's arms to this same waltz?

Angela, waiting a moment, a little hot and giddy, followed them with admiring eyes.

"How well they dance together," she said, turning to her partner, who happened to be Terence O'Brien. "And what a lovely woman Mrs. Borlase is!"

"Yes, she is well enough," he replied rather shortly.

"Don't you admire her?" she said, looking up in surprise at his tone. "I have fallen quite in love with her; she has been so kind to me." Like most people, she found talking to Terry easy work; he was so young, and bright, and adaptable.

"Kind to you, was she? H'm! The kindness of a cat, perhaps, who rubs herself against you and purrs when she wants you to move out of the way and give her the warmest corner by the fire!" And then, before she had time to recover from her astonishment, he had turned her gently round among the dancers again.

When the waltz was half over Mrs. Borlase stopped suddenly. Valentine looked at her in surprise, for he knew that, as a rule, she would go through the whole dance without, as the phrase is, "turning a hair."

"It is too warm," she said; "I am really quite tired. Come outside and make me one of those delicious American drinks. Do you remember that was always a strong point of yours? You have not forgotten it, I hope?"

Seeing that there was no escape, he wisely resigned himself without a murmur. "She will have it," he thought, "so better

get it over," and he offered his arm with an impassive face.

She sat down on a wicker couch that stood on the lawn—a souvenir from Madeira—and having handed her a little tumbler, in which a lump of ice bobbed up and down in the yellow liquid, and something else floated on the top, he seated himself beside her.

"You have brought nothing for yourself," she said, as she put the straw daintily between her teeth and drank a little.

"Thank you, I am not thirsty."

"And since when does a man only drink when he is thirsty—in Kimberley, at least?" she asked, with a laugh.

"It would be a very good thing for Kimberley if it were so," he rejoined emphatically. "Of course the good folks who prate about the folly of drinking anything between meals don't know what a dust-storm is. When one is careering round, and you feel as though you had swallowed a peck of it, you must have something to take the taste out of your mouth; but that is a very different thing from the 'nips' and 'splits' that go on here all day long without any excuse." If he could keep on in this moralising vein he might still be safe, he thought.

"Yes," she said, sighing softly, "it is not a nice place in many ways, I know that only too well. But we have our living to get, and here we must stop." As a matter of fact no other existence would have suited her half as well. "That is why," still more softly, "I have appreciated your friendship so much—you are so different from the other men here. I amuse myself with them—but with you——" She lingered on the last word, letting her voice drop away, faintly, musically, without finishing the sentence.

"Yes, we have been very good friends," he said in his most matter-of-fact tone, "and I hope we shall be so still. He smiled to himself at the ease with which she had turned the conversation round. "I am sure my wife would join me in this wish were she here."

"Your wife—your wife, Val; how strange that word sounds from you—to me!"

"Oh, it's come now, no mistake," he thought desperately, but outwardly he was perfectly calm and composed.

"Yes, you know everything was done in such a hurry, or I should certainly have sent you and the Judge word. I owe you an apology for my rudeness."

"Surely there need be no question of apology from you to me, Val! I was grieved, of course, that you did not make a little difference between me and the rest of the world—that was all. But, of course, I shall have to get accustomed to that now. It is hard lines, though, I won't deny it. When there is one man who understands you, if no one else does—one man who can feel for you and sympathise with you—and he goes and gets married, it is a little hard on the woman who is left behind, is it not, Val?"

His breath came quicker. What a soft, cooing voice it was; and though he did not look up he could feel that long gaze from the plaintive blue eyes.

"Mrs. Borlase," he began, steadying himself after a moment.

"Mrs. Borlase? It used to be 'Ida' not so long ago," she said.

"Yes, but you know all that must be changed now. There are plenty of men, of course, who think that marriage should leave you almost, if not quite, as free as you were before. I do not hold that opinion. To my idea it brings with it sacred duties and obligations, which," reverently, "please Heaven I will do my best to fulfil."

An ugly sneer disfigured the woman's face for a moment, but he did not see it.

"It never seemed to strike you," she said, "that you might be taking me away from these same duties and obligations when you called for me so often to go riding or driving with you, or when you used to sit with me in this garden for hours at a time."

He might have retorted that if he had not played that part some one else would; but the instincts of a gentleman prevented him.

"It did not strike me at the time," he said gravely, "but that is no excuse for me; it ought to have done so. I had no right to monopolise you as I did. Will you forgive me? Shall we forget the past and start afresh?"

"Am I the sort of woman, do you think, to forgive and forget?" she asked, rising to her feet with a laugh. And before he could make any reply she had left him.

He sank back on the wicker seat again for a moment.

"She has taken it badly," he thought. "I was half afraid she would. It would have been all right if I had been willing to fall back into my old position; indeed, I am not sure," with a little cynical smile, "that she would not have even enjoyed

the change then. There would have been more piquancy in having a married man at her heels than one of the unattached. Well," shrugging his shoulders, "I am sorry; but it was unavoidable. I had to make matters clear to her, even if it was a little brutal. I would not risk giving Angela one unhappy minute for such a matter."

Then he, too, went into the house. But though he tried to convince himself that he had no cause for uneasiness, that Mrs. Borlase's words were only those of an angry woman and would soon be forgotten, he was not quite comfortable.

"What harm could she do me even if she wished?" he asked himself impatiently, annoyed at not being able to forget the affair as speedily as he would have wished. Like most men, he had sown his seed with a careless hand; but the harvest was undesired.

He hesitated, as they were driving home, as to whether he should mention what had occurred to Angela, or, at least, give her some idea of the intimacy that had existed between himself and Ida Borlase previous to his marriage. At present she had no idea that they were more than ordinary friends. But he shrank from doing so. And when she nestled close up to him, and in answer to his tender enquiries said, "Yes, she had enjoyed herself very, very much; but she was dreadfully tired, and her head ached," he threw his arm round her and decided that the propitious moment had not arrived, and that he was not going to worry her about anything then.

So, with her head on his shoulder, and the moon lighting the road before them until it was nearly as clear as at noonday, they drove home in almost unbroken silence. When they reached the Retreat, and Angela would have jumped down, Valentine caught her in his arms, and, with a happy laugh, carried her indoors.

Valentine was busy at the office the next day, and did not go home to luncheon; but, as was his custom at such times, sent out for some sandwiches and a small bottle of Pontac, and made a hasty meal in his own room.

He had nearly cleared off all his work, and was looking forward to getting home early in time for a cup of tea with Angela, when one of his subordinates came in to say that a Kaffir boy was outside with a message for him.

"Show him in," he said hastily, without looking up.

"Will the Baas come home? Missis ill; got fever," came the laconic announcement the next moment as the door closed, and looking up with a start, he recognised one of his own boys.

"What did you say?" he almost shouted. "Your mistress is ill?" And he sprang up from his seat. "She was all right this morning."

Then he remembered that she had seemed tired and languid; but he had put it down to the heat and the previous night's dissipation, and without waiting for another word, took up his hat and went out.

Stopping the first empty Cape-cart he met, he got in, and told the man to drive as quickly as he could to Dr. Stannard's. He knew the deadly swiftness of the "camp" fever; how in a few hours it could change health into wild delirium; and he was anxious to have the doctor on the spot as soon as possible. Of course, this might not be a case needing such despatch—he fervently hoped it was not—but he would not run any risk.

Fortunately he found his old friend at home, and in a few minutes they were on the road again.

"I am glad you called for me," said Jim Stannard in a matter-of-fact tone, for he saw that Valentine was terribly nervous and anxious, though he tried to hide it. "It is as well to take it in time, but I don't suppose there is much cause for alarm. You know nearly every one has it one time or another—you are lucky if you only get it once—and Mrs. Forsyth is young and—and fairly healthy, I should think." He had been about to say "strong," but with a swift recollection of the slender, almost fragile, figure and delicately fair face, he felt that this was not the right word to use.

"Yes, as you say, almost every one gets it some time or another," replied Valentine; but this seemed to him poor comfort after all. We may weep with those that weep, but it is only when our tears are shed for our own woes that the full bitterness enters into them.

As they walked through the dusty garden to the house—the sweet-scented petunias were blooming gaily, and arum lilies and other choice flowers stood about in tins on the verandah just as he had left them in the morning—Valentine half expected to see the pretty, white-robed

figure come out and welcome him. But instead, Clara, one of the house servants, came to the door with a grave face.

"How is your mistress?" he asked, and his lips were so dry and there was such a strange lump in his throat that he could scarcely speak.

"I am afraid she is very ill, sir," came the low reply, and without another word he turned into the bedroom, followed by Dr. Stannard.

Angela was lying on the bed, her hair tossed over the pillows, her hands flung out over the lace coverlet, but for the moment so quiet, so motionless, that she might have been in a deep sleep. Valentine stepped softly up and laid his hand lightly on one of hers—it burnt like fire. That light touch was sufficient to rouse her. She opened her eyes and looked round.

"Angela! Angela! don't you know me, my darling?" he asked gently, as the brown eyes, vacant, expressionless now, and burning with the fierce fever-light, looked into his without a glance of recognition. "I am Valentine, and—and—" here the lump rose in his throat and threatened to choke him—"I have come home to take care of my little girl."

Jim Stannard put him gently on one side.

"Pull yourself together, old man; you mustn't break down here," he said with rough kindness, and laying his fingers on Angela's pulse, he looked into her face with keen, professional eyes.

"All the flowers are dead," she murmured softly, "the hot wind has shrivelled them up, and it is burning me, too—it is burning the life out of me. . . . He is like all other men, she said. Don't look so miserable, pretty child—fidelity is an unknown quantity, with a man, at all events—with a man. Oh, yes, he was very fond of me once upon a time; did he not tell you? Only a little while ago, too. . . . He might have trampled on me, I loved him so dearly, and he has trampled on me—on my heart, which was under his feet; but it is no good, I cannot keep him—he will go away from me soon; that lovely green and white snake will wind herself round and round him and win him back. . . . Poor Val! poor Val! I am not angry, dear, only sorry—sorry for you and for—me."

"What does this mean—anything?" asked Jim Stannard with averted eyes. "Or is it only delirium?"

"I cannot tell," said Valentine hoarsely.

"I——" Then he got up from the bed where he had sat watching his wife with agonised eyes and rang the bell sharply. "Has any one been here to-day, Clara?" he asked when she came to the door.

"No, sir. At least, Mrs. Borlase was here this morning for a little while. The mistress was lying outside in the hammock, and I saw her get off her horse as she was riding past and come up and speak to her."

"Thank you; that will do."

When she had gone, Valentine looked across at his friend, and their eyes met.

"The fiend!" he muttered under his breath. And the doctor nodded assentingly.

Hour after hour went by, and the two watchers still sat in the dimly-lighted room with the windows thrown wide open to let in the cool night air. Everything had been done that could be done; every remedy tried that might by chance allay the fierceness of the fever and bring even temporary rest to the busy, working brain, but without much success; and Dr. Stannard was more than doubtful of the result. The little hot hands were not still for five minutes together, the throbbing head was tossed restlessly from side to side in a vain search for ease, and the tuneless, unnatural voice babbled on almost unceasingly—now in a dull, monotonous undertone; now with painful shrillness—of her girlhood's home; of green fields and cool, running water, which were always just out of reach; but most of all of Valentine, of the dearly-loved husband who was drifting away from her, though she clung to him with desperate fingers and implored him, in tones that wrung the hearts of her listeners, not to leave her, not to go away with that other woman, to love her a little still.

"Yes; that is what rankles," thought the doctor to himself. "I dare not tell him so; but there might be a chance but for that. That wretched woman has done the mischief. Poor Val! He is paying dearly for his little amusement."

It was about four o'clock in the morning. Angela had been lying quiet for a little while, gazing before her with blank, unseeing eyes, when she said musingly:

"That was a lovely waltz we had together, Val; do you remember?" Dr. Stannard noticed that her voice was perceptibly weaker, and the pulse under his fingers was beating very feebly. "It was called 'The Last Waltz,' I think, and it

was the last. That was very appropriate, was it not?" It was additional torture to the man at her side that she should speak to him by name thus, and for the moment so quietly and reasonably, and yet know nothing of his presence. "It was such a pretty tune, too. How did it go?—the sort of tune that bothers you afterwards. Some of the men sang a verse or two, do you remember? I wonder if I could recollect the words." And in an uncertain voice she began to sing:

"After to-night, after to-night,
What will to-morrow be?
You in the light, I in the night,
Out on the boundless sea."

"Out on the boundless sea!" Was not that where she was drifting—the unknown sea of death—alone—in the night—his little child wife, his cherished darling? He was helpless; he could do nothing for her—only watch the black waters creeping up to her closer and closer. His arms were not strong enough to hold her; his love had been too poor a thing to make her happy, even for a few months. She was going away from him, thinking him false—thinking that already he had grown weary of her.

"Oh, Jim, Jim! for Heaven's sake!" he cried—a bewildered, appealing cry, wrung from a heart tortured beyond its strength, and seeing no comfort anywhere.

"Hush, Val, dear old fellow; bear up a little longer. It will soon be over now, I am afraid."

"It was a pity you should get tired of me, Val, wasn't it?" Angela went on. "You are a little sorry, I am sure, dear; because you were very fond of me once, I know, and we were very happy. And you were always so gentle and kind, dear; you wouldn't have broken my heart if you could have helped it—if you could have helped it!"

"I can't bear this," said Valentine, looking up with sudden fierceness, and there was a wild, strained look in his eyes that was painful to see. "It will drive me mad. Is there nothing you can do—nothing? Won't your boasted science give her one minute of reason, that she may look in my face and know the truth?"

Dr. Stannard hesitated a moment. If there were any chance of recovery, he could not do it; but he thought—he knew there was not. Should he not give his friend any comfort there was to give, even though by so doing he might make death a little harder for the dying girl?

"I think I can rouse her," he said with sudden decision. "Wait a moment."

He took a little bottle from a case that lay on the table, and carefully pouring a few drops into a glass, inserted it between the parched, blackened lips. The effect was almost instantaneous. Angela's eyes softened, and the light of reason came slowly back. She gave a little bewildered look round the room, and then turned to meet Valentine's intent gaze of mingled agony and love.

"Is that you, Val?" she said in a faint whisper. "I am so tired—so dreadfully tired. Lift me up in your arms, darling, I think I could go to sleep there."

When with infinite tenderness he raised her head on his breast, she gave a soft little sigh of content; the next moment her limbs relaxed and she fell back in his arms—dead.

A DISTURBING ELEMENT.

A STORY IN SIX CHAPTERS.

By EVELYN FLETCHER.

CHAPTER V.

"YOU are talking nonsense, Maud, and you know it," said Aunt Joan grimly.

"I'm talking sense—common sense—and you ought to respect it."

Maud's face was flushed, and her blue eyes flashed ominously. As she stood there, with her head thrown back, and her hand grasping a crumpled-up letter, confronting the indignant old lady, there was a certain faint but unmistakable resemblance between them that no one would ever have detected in the girl's more ordinary moods. A likeness in spirit, as it were, that broke through all difference of form and feature, and claimed kinship in face of a thousand obstacles.

"It might be common sense if you could act up to it, but you know you can't; therefore it's foolish as well as wrong," Aunt Joan said with decision. "Some girls, no doubt, are quite capable of marrying for money, and living happy ever after; but you are not one of them. Why, you'd be wretched in a week."

"I don't know that I look for happiness exactly."

"I should think not, indeed; with a man old enough to be your grandfather, and with nothing but his money to re-

commend him! A pretty bridegroom for a girl of twenty! I should be the better match for him."

"But think of all that money can do; and we want money so horribly. The boys' education——"

"Send them to the Board School; they'll learn quite enough there to unfit them for any sphere of usefulness anywhere, and that is about all your father thinks of. He's been working on you, I see."

"Indeed he has not; but my mother——"

"Was a sensible woman once; but small means and an unlimited family softened her brain long ago. If she backs you up in this, I shall think they have also hardened her heart."

"Really, Aunt Joan——"

"Now don't be angry, child. I am speaking of people I knew long before you were born, and I'm too old to change my opinions, or my mode of expressing them. Never marry at all if you please; you may still be content enough, and preserve a fair amount of self-respect; but don't marry a man you don't care about. In your case it could only end in hopeless failure."

"But—there is so much to consider. You don't know what anxious work it always is at home, and my mother is worked to death."

"Hum! your father isn't, I'll be bound. If you do marry this man, pray is he expected to keep your family, Maud? For that hardly strikes me as a fair arrangement."

"Of course not!" indignantly. "But—I might be able to help—in little ways; to do—something."

"He might, you mean," Aunt Joan retorted. "Look facts fairly in the face, child; believe me, it's better in the long run. But if that is all, I propose an alternative arrangement. You come and live with me, and I'll take all your expenses, and allow you one hundred pounds a year to lavish on your family. I doubt whether the projected bridegroom would offer to do as much, and you couldn't in common fairness ask him to do more. That will lighten your mother's anxieties, and yet leave you free."

"It is very kind of you, Aunt Joan."

"That is settled, then; write and tell them so."

"My mother would never consent; and I know I ought to stay and help her till Rose is old enough to take my place."

"And is the elderly bridegroom to wait for this? Nonsense! If you talk such

rubbish as that, I shall think you really want to marry the fellow."

"Want' to marry him?" Maud repeated bitterly. "I tell you I hate, I loathe the very idea. I feared something of this, and I never felt so thankful for anything in this world as I did for your letter inviting me here, for I hoped he might change his mind. Oh! Aunt Joan, what am I to do—what am I to do?"

"Send him about his business, and—if you won't remain here altogether—stay with me till the storm has blown over," Miss Raven replied promptly.

"But it will be such a disappointment at home, for they have quite made up their minds I shall accept him."

"They must unmake them again, that's all. And now go and show Rupert the way to Bourneby Woods, as you promised; he is waiting for you in the garden."

Maud dried her eyes, threw her arms round the old lady's neck, and kissed her under the shadow of the deep-sea helmet, glanced in the looking-glass hurriedly, and ran out into the garden to join Rupert.

"Poor child!" Miss Raven ejaculated, as she stood in her favourite attitude, and watched them from the window. "She shan't be sacrificed if I can help it. It's a shame, and I'll write and tell them so if necessary. I wish that Rupert—but there, things may all come right yet!" With which consolatory reflection she dismissed the subject.

Meantime Rupert and Maud pursued their way through the fields and lanes, as they had done many a time during the few weeks that had elapsed since their arrival at Ravensbourne; for—despite his five-and-thirty years—the girl had found it was her mission to amuse him, and they had become very fast friends in consequence.

But to-day she certainly was not so successful as usual. Her sudden bursts of gaiety struck Rupert as strangely forced and unnatural, while at times she was silent and preoccupied, and hardly appeared to hear what he said to her. Her expression, too, was anxious and troubled, and more than once he fancied he detected tears in the deep blue eyes instead of the laughter he was accustomed to see there.

"Maud," he said at length, "I'm afraid you are tired. Shall we turn back, and leave the woods till another day?"

"No, oh no!" She looked up as she spoke, and laughed nervously. "We will go now, for another day I may not be here."

"You are not going away, surely?" he asked, in unfeigned astonishment.

"Perhaps—I don't know—I can't tell what to do!" she replied. "Aunt Joan won't hear of it."

"I'm glad of that!" heartily. "Be guided by Aunt Joan; she's a sensible woman."

"Yes, but she won't see the necessity; and——"

"Perhaps there is no necessity. There are a lot of you at home, are there not?"

"Yes; that is just it. If there were only one or two of us——"

"Surely, you could not be so easily spared as when there are a round dozen. Your numbers should make everything easy."

"Ah, but you don't understand. I don't want to go home, but I may have to. They think I ought to go."

"Your people?"

"Yes, my people."

Rupert was puzzled. The girl's manner was almost tragic in its intensity, and yet, so far as he knew, there was no reason for such distress. Probably Aunt Joan would have influence enough to keep her niece as long as she liked, and, in any case, Maud herself was not deficient in self-will.

"I thought you sometimes stopped here for months at a time," he said at length, looking down at her as she leant against a gate, her eyes bent moodily upon the ground.

"I have done so; yes."

"And will again. Don't cut your visit short just now, and leave me on the old ladies' hands. What on earth would become of us all?"

"You don't understand," she repeated.

"I know I don't; neither, apparently, does Aunt Joan. Now I have a great respect for Aunt Joan's judgement."

"But she will only look at a thing from her own point of view."

"Very wise of her; it simplifies life wonderfully."

"Yes, but is it right? Can it be right to think only of oneself?"

"I'm afraid not, unfortunately. But is this such a very serious matter? I thought——"

"If I go back now it means the sacrifice of my whole life," she said passionately. "It means unconditional surrender."

"Surrender?"

"Yes, they expect it of me; and I don't know what to do or what to think."

"No one has any right to ask the sacrifice of anybody's whole life," he said quickly. "Don't go back. Stay with us."

"That is what Aunt Joan says."

"Be guided by her; after all, though there may be a duty you owe to your people, there's a duty you owe to yourself, too. I should think Aunt Joan is a fairly impartial person, so you cannot do better than act on her advice."

"You really think so?"

"Of course; always supposing she knows all the facts of the case, which I don't."

"Yes, she knows;" but she made no offer to enlighten him. Had he wished her to do so? She did not know; perhaps he hardly knew himself.

"You'll stay, then; for you know you can't be spared yet. There are heaps of places Aunt Joan said you were to show me."

Rupert spoke lightly enough, and did not allow her to see how much her words perplexed him. Such half-confidences are never very easy to deal with, and he thought the best plan was to attach as little importance to them as possible. By-and-by, if she liked to tell him more——

But they went to the woods and returned home again, and not another word passed on the subject.

Did she regret having said so much? Rupert began to fear so. For himself, by the time they entered the iron gates again his only regret was that she had not told him all, and made the whole position clear to him. Surely, he thought, she might have trusted him so far?

CHAPTER VI.

THEY found Aunt Deborah and Aunt Emmie waiting for them in the garden, the latter in a state of great, though suppressed, excitement.

"My dear Maud," she began breathlessly, as soon as she could make herself heard, "such a strange thing has happened. And Joan was out, and you away, and Rupert—who might have entertained him—though, indeed, they could have little in common——"

"Really, Emmie, you are scarcely intelligible," Mrs. Cranstoun observed. "Sit down, Maud, and I will explain matters a little more clearly. An elderly—person has been here, and he asked to see you. He came, ostensibly, with your father's permission——"

"But we could not understand it, really we could not," Aunt Emmie broke in eagerly. "For he did not seem a gentleman exactly, or quite right in his mind. He talked so strangely, didn't he, Deborah?"

"He made some most extraordinary assertions," Aunt Deborah observed coldly. "Really, Maud, if you have many acquaintances of this peculiarly undesirable type, I think your father is very greatly to be blamed for allowing us to be troubled with them. He has no manners, I assure you; absolutely none! He actually said he hoped to be my nephew before long! A man not a gentleman, and old enough to be my brother!" And the dainty old lady bridled and drew herself up. "I was never so insulted in my life."

Maud looked from one to the other and flushed crimson.

"He had no right to come here; he had no right to say such things," she exclaimed passionately. "He had no right to take things for granted, and—oh, I hope you have sent him away again!"

"We could not do that, my dear, and he with your father's permission," said Aunt Emmie gently. "But we did what seemed best."

"And that was——"

"Sent him away for an hour, for we thought that by that time Joan would be back. He has gone to the inn, I believe; but—oh, my dear, surely it is all a mistake, for he seems such a vulgar person!"

"He is," said Maud, with conviction; "but he is rich, and—oh, I wish I'd never met him! I wish he and his money were at the bottom of the sea!"

"Never mind, dear. Joan will be here directly now," Aunt Emmie said soothingly. "She has only gone to see Mrs. Smith."

"Shall I go down the road and meet her?" Rupert asked, with a quick glance at Maud. "I know the cottage."

"I wish you would," Aunt Deborah exclaimed. "I really cannot encounter him again."

Rupert nodded and turned away. He, like Aunt Emmie, had great faith in Miss Raven's force of character. Besides, she knew all about Maud's troubles, and would be able to help her out of them if anybody could. In any case he could do nothing, and would be better out of the way.

Yet he was greatly troubled and perplexed. He knew nothing of the girl's domestic anxieties, nor of the influences

which had been brought to bear upon her; and it gave him a moral shock to hear her speak of this old man's money as though she might have a possible interest in it. He liked Maud, he told himself; he liked her very much indeed, and he respected her; but surely if such a man as her aunts described ventured "to take things for granted" in this way, she must have done a little more than tolerate him in the past. Altogether, Rupert felt strangely disappointed in her, and more hurt than he would have cared to confess; for, after all, what could it matter to him? Soon, very soon now, he would be leaving Ravensbourne; and in his wandering life there would be little probability of their meeting again. Somehow it had never struck him in this light before; nor was the idea—now that it had occurred to him—at all a pleasant one.

He quickened his steps unconsciously, and walked swiftly on up the road to the village, not doubting that he should presently meet Aunt Joan, from whom he might hear further particulars; but Aunt Joan, as it chanced, had gone home another way.

Thus she arrived before him, and was received by her sisters with a highly sensational account of their interview with Maud's objectionable suitor, to which she listened quietly and without comment, merely nodding her large round hat once or twice so emphatically that, had it not been secured by a broad ribbon under the chin, it must have fallen to the ground.

"Where's the child now?" she demanded at length, when the flood of words had somewhat abated.

"Gone to her own room in a tantrum," Mrs. Cranstone said sweetly. "Really, one cannot say a word to young people nowadays. I merely observed that it was a most unfortunate coincidence that this should have occurred while Rupert was with us, and she flared up in a moment—asked if we thought it was pleasant for her, and a great deal of nonsense—and ran upstairs in a fine temper. I should just let her alone, Joan, if I were you."

"Pity you didn't think of that in time, Deb, for it's a little late now," brusquely. "You might have seen the girl was overstrained, and worried out of her life; but you never see an inch beyond your nose, and you never think of any one but yourself. Emmie, you're a good soul! Just run up and tell Maud not to worry herself any more. Tell her I've seen the fellow, and sent him about his business."

"Oh, Joan! But how?"

"A little plain-speaking, that was all." And Miss Raven chuckled grimly at the recollection. "Well, he brought it on himself. He won't come here any more. And I shall write to her father and give him a piece of my mind. Such a man! A man! An elderly money-bag, rather! Where's Rupert?" she broke off abruptly.

"Gone to Mrs. Smith's to meet you." And Aunt Emmie hurried off on her errand.

"Ah, then I'll go down to the gate and meet him." And she did.

When Maud came downstairs a little later she saw them returning together, and slipped out at the garden door so as to avoid meeting them; for she was bitterly conscious of the truth of Aunt Deborah's words, and felt that she would not for the world Rupert should have known of all this.

What could he think of her? she wondered painfully, as she ran down a side walk to the little wood; and her pale cheeks flamed as she recalled that one quick glance he had given her—a glance so full of question and of doubt.

She threw herself down on the grass, in the wavering lights and shadows beneath the trees, and hid her burning face in her hands.

Oh, if only she could hide herself altogether from him! If only she could forget, and be forgotten, for ever!

"Maud! Maud! Where are you?"

His voice sounded cheerily through the summer silence, and she started and sprang to her feet.

"Maud, I say! Maud!"

He was close at hand now. Even as she stood there listening he came from behind the trees, and the dreaded moment of meeting was over.

"Aunt Joan sent me," he said, speaking rather rapidly, and as though a little doubtful of his reception. "She has just come home, and she wants to see you presently."

"I will go to her at once."

She spoke nervously, and turned to go; but he came nearer, and laid a detaining hand on her arm.

"She said 'presently,' Maud. I want to see you—to speak to you—now!"

He paused, but she made no reply. She stood there waiting, her eyes bent on the ground; and he looked at her in silence.

The sunbeams shone on her golden hair, lighting it up gloriously; but her face was half averted from him, and in shadow, so that he could not see the changing emotions that flitted across it. But something in her attitude moved him strangely, and he exclaimed:

"Maud, you and I are friends—true friends. May I speak frankly to you?"

"Yes," she said, after a moment's hesitation; but she did not turn to him, or raise her eyes from the ground.

"Aunt Joan has told me all. I know what the trouble was at which you hinted, and how you have been urged to sacrifice yourself for your family. I am sure you know how deeply I respect you for wishing to help those who seem to have had so little consideration for you; but it was a mistake, dear—indeed it was a mistake."

"I know it."

She spoke so low that her voice was scarcely audible.

"Maud, we are agreed in this. Must our agreement stop here? We are such good friends that is it not possible we may be yet more to each other? This—mistake has shown me something that I did not know before. I love you, dear."

She raised her eyes then, and looked at him intently, wondering.

"Me? You love me?" she faltered.

"You can say so after this!"

"Why not? It was for your people's sake you tried to think of it, and I heartily respect your motives. But what is my answer, Maud? I'm too old for you, I know—five-and-thirty, and——"

"He was over fifty!" she said, blushing hotly.

"I've led a wandering life," he went on, without heeding the interruption; "but have gathered some moss for a rolling stone, so that I'm not quite a pauper. Will you come out with me when I go back to Australia, and make the happiness of my life?"

"With you, Rupert? Yes; wherever you please."

So they settled it; and Aunt Emmie wept with joy, while Aunt Joan gave them her blessing. But Aunt Deborah only said she thought Rupert might have done very much better. However, she always said that of every bridegroom, so that no one attached much importance to her opinion.

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MISS LATIMER OF BRYANS.

BY ELEANOR C. PRICE.

Author of "Alexia," "Red Towers," "The Little One," etc.

CHAPTER XXII. NOVEMBER.

ARTHUR himself appeared to aim at perfection, and not unsuccessfully, during that month of November, the happiest month that Poppy had ever known. Miss Fanny Latimer was disappointed, though in her heart she admired him for it, because he took Poppy's side on the question of changes, alterations, and decorations at the Court. Every word he said on this subject raised him higher, if that was possible, in Poppy's esteem. He understood all that she felt, it seemed. The associations of the old rooms with their old furniture might have been his own, he treated them so tenderly. The way in which he made himself one with Poppy in these matters showed that genius for sympathy which the most affectionate people do not always possess; and every day her love for him, which grew first out of the attraction of his looks and manners, went on deepening and strengthening into a heaven of perfect trust.

Poppy felt that she knew Arthur as she knew herself. There was nothing that she could not say to him; she knew that she would never be disappointed, would always find what she wanted. She gave herself to Arthur with the generosity, the simplicity, the occasional touch of mysterious, unbelieving wonder—"can this be myself?"—of a girl who had never guessed what love, or even friendship, could be. She left her life in his hands, as she had

first laid it there, without a thought of doubt or hesitation. Arthur was herself—a better, stronger, wiser self. Poppy felt that she would never again know any of the anxious perplexities which had weighed on her so often since she became mistress of Bryans. All would now be as Arthur chose. It was no slavish adoration. Poppy, in her blindest moments, was not capable of that. It was the certainty of a deep, perfect, reasonable agreement between herself and this man who was to be her husband. He understood her, and she trusted him.

All this sounds at first rather unaccountable. Mr. Cantillon found it so, though few people knew Poppy as he did, or realised so well how far a strong personal devotion might carry her. The whole affair was to him a sad spectacle, for he never, even to please Poppy, and still more Poppy's aunt, could bring himself to any cordial liking for Arthur. Afterwards he explained it, and excused Poppy, by saying that Arthur Nugent was a young man with a most wonderful talent for adapting himself to circumstances—a talent much more often possessed by women than by men, and generally with less unfortunate consequences. In either sex, the Rector observed, such a character must be deceptive; but it need not be intentionally so. And, he theorised further, it may happen that such a character passes through life without bringing any catastrophe on those who blindly trust it. That depends on the temptations it meets by the way. These, he said, are generally stronger, and less easily resisted, in the case of a man than of a woman. So much in excuse for Poppy's poor ideal.

Having come down to Bryans for a night, Arthur stayed a week. He then

went back to London for some necessary business, and came down again after a few days, bringing his mother with him.

Nothing could be more serene and pleasant than Mrs. Nugent's humour. She found the old-world stateliness of Bryans so satisfactory to a soul wearied with ceaseless effort—that effort, the most fatiguing of all, to be smart without fortune, to hang on the sharp and perilous edge of the fashionable world, leading a life of small triumphs and great, bitter, silent disappointments—that it never occurred to her to pull the house down, as Fanny Latimer had expected, or even to insist on new furniture and the banishment of large pictures from the drawing-room. Fanny was really disappointed by the meekness with which her friend accepted the old Court as it was. In Arthur of course it was not astonishing: he only cared to please Poppy: but where was his mother's ambition gone, not to mention her views on "high art"?

"Oh, don't mention art, my dear!" she even said impatiently. "This is life, the life of all your generations of Latimers. One would as soon do up an old Italian palace, and pack away all the ancestral things in the garret! My dear Fanny, it seems to me that you don't know when you are well off. From your descriptions I expected something quite hideous and uninteresting."

"So it is, I think," said Fanny, defending herself.

"Don't say that to anybody but me," said Mrs. Nugent, shaking her head. "No, no, I want nothing more. I am the happiest woman in the world."

"Except Poppy!"

"Dear Poppy! Indeed I hope so. But happiness is worth a good deal more at my age than at hers, you know."

It was a calm, mild November, and the glory of the woods lingered on. Poppy had decided not to hunt that season. Arthur was not strong enough for it, and she could not separate herself from him. The idea of shooting, too, to the disappointment of the keepers, found him languid and disinclined. He seemed to want no other occupation but to loiter about Bryans, making acquaintance with every tree and glade, every gate, every lane, and showing no unwillingness to be friendly with all the people, were they Poppy's tenants or not. He went with her to all her special friends, and the impression he made was generally very good. The

smiling, handsome young man seemed to promise Bryans a pleasant future. Only such cranky spirits as old Mr. Farrant put on a sour face to greet him, and Maggie's manner was shy and strange during the visit to her grandfather. She sat in the window, her dark brows bent over her knitting, and hardly spoke. Arthur watched her all the more.

He had seen her several times since that first meeting in the wood, but she had never seemed willing to talk to him, and would seldom lift her eyes to meet those which very plainly sought them, putting on a rather forced unconsciousness. All this passed unheeded by Poppy, and Arthur made no attempt to improve his acquaintance with her friend.

He tried that day to talk agreeably to the old man, whose hawk eyes watched him with an unfriendly stare.

"I don't like that Captain Nugent. He's an ass," came the swift judgement when the two were gone.

"He was nice enough to you. And I'm sure she looks happy. Why don't you like him, grandfather? You don't like anybody."

"Young men—I don't like young men—the youth of the period. He thinks himself irresistible—a bigger fool than most. One of these days, your young lady will repent spoiling him as she does. It makes me angry to see it."

Maggie was silent; perhaps she agreed. In a moment her grandfather went on:

"You have no right to say that I don't like anybody. I did like Geoffrey Thorne. But he's the same as the rest: they get what they want, and off they go. Do you remember all my goodness to him? I let him sit staring at you for weeks, all for his selfish art's sake; and since that picture was finished he has hardly been to the house. How many days is it since he was here? Answer, can't you?"

"I don't know," said the girl. "What is it to me? I have something else to do than to count the days between Mr. Geoffrey Thorne's visits."

She laughed slightly, but there was an odd pain in her voice.

"Maggie, Maggie," said the old man, "what's the matter? Have you anything to tell me, child?"

"What should I have to tell you?"

"The world forsakes you, it seems," he said. "It's the way of the world. I've done all I can for you—all I can; but I can't put you on a level with your friend,

and even if I could, it would be the same. She would still take away her heart from you and give it to some smiling ass with as much brains as a candlestick. That's human nature; nothing to do with position. You must be independent of her; that is the only thing for you. You have no trouble besides that, Maggie, have you? If there's anything you are hiding from me, I'll—I'll disinherit you."

"Really, I don't know what you are talking about," said Maggie.

She came to the fire and sat down on a little stool in front of it, near the old man's feet. She looked up and smiled at him, stretching out her hands to warm them. In the red light she was a lovely picture.

"That's a brave girl," said the old man. "As long as you can smile your nice baby smile we won't care about all the Miss Latimers in creation, or their love-affairs either. It's a pity that good-for-nothing painter can't see you now; he would make a fire-light picture. I suspect he agrees with me: the prettiest woman in the village, or the county, if you like, is not Miss Latimer."

"I expect he doesn't, grandfather. Nobody has such silly ideas but you. As for him, he thinks there is nobody on earth like Poppy. And he's right. I agree with him."

"Oh, I dare say. We all have a theory about admiring the moon."

"I can't understand you," Maggie broke out with a kind of passion. "You ought to be glad—everybody else is—that she should marry and be happy. Think what a good thing it is for Bryans. They will live here always." Her voice failed a little and her smile fled. "I suppose you think I'm jealous. If I am, there couldn't be a worse fool than me; and you ought to scold me instead of talking nonsense. Oh, Poppy! I only wish I was good enough. I hope he's good enough. Nobody ever can care about her as she deserves. She only makes one hate oneself, that's all. Didn't you see how she could think of nothing but him?"

"It was not difficult." The old man's hard, mocking manner had softened; his eyes were quiet. He could understand the girl better now.

"Well, Maggie, all you say is very fine," he said. "I'll tell you a secret. I hope she will be happy—sincerely I do; but that young fellow is not worthy of her, you know. He doesn't care for her as she cares for him. It is a fine match for him,

no doubt; a made-up thing, unless I'm uncommonly mistaken. Poor soul! Well, here's another secret. If I were a young man I should never fall in love with Miss Latimer."

"That would be your loss, not hers," said the girl, with a laugh.

This was the strange and unsettling kind of talk to which Maggie had to listen by the hour in those days. She did her best, in her own way—it generally succeeded with him—to keep her grandfather in a fairly good humour. For this end it was necessary to let him say what he pleased, and thus he wandered on in his wrong-headed, foolish fashion, bringing no help at all to the girl whom he loved with all the strength of his queer nature.

Geoffrey Thorne's slackness was a real disappointment to him. He had quite made up his mind as to what the portrait-painting should lead to. He was angry with him. He was unreasonably angry, too, with Miss Latimer, who had done nothing to forward his plans for Maggie. They all seemed occupied with their own affairs, it seemed, and his little girl was left out in the cold. There was real anxiety at the bottom of all the nonsense he talked at this time. Now and then, it is true, Maggie succeeded in reassuring him, but again his keen eyes perceived that some sadness hung about her obstinately. He laid the fault sometimes on Geoffrey Thorne's stupidity, sometimes on Miss Latimer's selfishness; but he could not remonstrate with either of them.

Though Poppy did not hunt that autumn, she could not quite keep away from her old favourite sport, and on several beautiful days in late November—days which in their soft brightness rivalled spring, and in colour surpassed it—she and Arthur followed the hounds in her light pony-cart. She did not actually go to the meet, but in driving round the country roads, among the woods by unfrequented lanes, she not only showed him her county as few people could have shown it, but made him acquainted with various distant friends who came upon them at unexpected corners. Arthur looked very handsome and charming as he sat beside her, warmly wrapped up, and showing no wish to take the reins out of her hands. And one cannot be sure whether, with all her faith, Poppy would have quite cared to trust him with her lively pony on these days. Bobby had hunting instincts, and if fox and hounds and scattered riders

had suddenly appeared on the distant edge of a purple wood, it is not certain that he would not have tried to take the nearest way to join them over a five-barred gate.

It was growing dusk one afternoon when Mr. Cantillon came out of his house on his way to the Court, and turning up to the avenue met Geoffrey Thorne on an old horse of his father's, very muddy, very pale, and riding slowly down the hill. He pulled up to speak to the Rector, and to tell him something about the run, which had been more disappointing than usual. Then he said, stooping forward and looking straight over his horse's ears into the twilight:

"But in spite of that there's nothing like it. I enjoy it as much now as when I was a lad. It must be trying for Captain Nugent not to be able to ride—and the field is nothing without Miss Latimer."

The Rector was pleased with the strong, steady tone of these words.

"He will be stronger by-and-by," he said. "Have you seen them to-day?"

"Yes; I passed them not long ago. I came by a short cut, but they won't be long."

The Rector looked up with somewhat puzzled eyes. He could not see well in the dim light, but it seemed to him that there was something odd about Geoffrey.

"Anything wrong?" he said. "Have you had a tumble, or what have you been doing? You shouldn't ride too hard when you are not used to it."

"Nothing," the young man answered quickly. "I'm going home gently. I thought I might meet you. The old nag is tired, too—Mr. Cantillon——"

"Well—what is it?"

"I was going to say—there's somebody up there by the gate. A woman, sitting on one of those stones in the shadow. If you are going that way, will you speak to her? I couldn't make her out, but there seemed to be something wrong."

"Did you speak to her? Do you know who it is?"

"No. I fancied—but I won't say, because I must have been wrong. What could she be doing there?"

"Who?"

"I would rather not say what I thought. Good-bye, sir."

Slowly the old horse carried Geoffrey away. The Rector did not ask him any more questions, but walked on at a quickened pace up the hill, feeling warmed and cheered, if a little disturbed, by these

few words with the man in his parish he loved best and trusted most implicitly.

By the great Court gates, their bronze bars and gilded curls rising tall against the faint light in the avenue, twilight was deepened by the low-spreading branches of two of the largest beech-trees. The lodge stood back, some fifty yards away, and at first in the dim stillness of the place Mr. Cantillon could not see any one. But as he stood looking into the shadow—on the wrong side, as it happened—somebody seemed to come up the hill and to overtake him suddenly.

"Miss Farrant!" said the Rector with a touch of sternness, "what are you doing here—cut—so late as this? What—why—have you been sitting on those stones? I don't understand."

"Sitting on those stones!" repeated Maggie. She began to laugh, but in an odd, agitated, tearful way which was not unlike sobbing. "What are you thinking of, please?" she said, in low and uncertain tones. "It is I that don't understand, Mr. Cantillon."

"I beg your pardon," said the Rector gently. "But is it not strange for you to be out here, so late in the afternoon?"

"You forget who I am. What does it matter about me?" As he was silent, surprised, and distressed, she went on. "Who told you? Mr. Thorne, I suppose. He passed just now. I wish people would not spy after me. I wish I could be let alone."

"Don't say such very odd things!" murmured the Rector. "Mr. Thorne saw somebody; he did not say it was you. Really, though, where are you going at this time of day?"

"I am going to see the old shepherd at the top of the hill. Old Tom—you know he is ill."

"Yes. Are you really?"

With all his natural courtesy, Mr. Cantillon could not keep a note of incredulity out of his voice. In the dim light, failing every moment, he fixed his eyes on Maggie with an almost painful effort of sight and understanding. The girl's manner was shrinking, though she tried to put a little bravado into it; her figure seemed to droop; she bent her head and looked down.

An indescribable thrill of anxiety and alarm, growing partly out of the quiet, chilly desolation of the autumn evening, the stillness through which dead leaves rustled to the ground, took possession of

the Rector. It seemed to him that the girl was in some danger, he could not tell what, and that he was responsible. He had never cared much for Maggie; she had always impressed him with a touch of commonness, flightiness, thickness of perception; he had also an instinct that in spite of all Poppy Latimer's affection and training, she was not a very good girl. He would not have breathed this to any one, and it was, in fact, nothing but a vague consciousness; but it stood between him and any real liking for Maggie, and strengthened the prejudice he felt against any match-making with his friend Geoffrey Thorne as its object. It may be thought that the Rector failed in charity, and had little faith in human nature. This is true, in spite of all his romantic kindnesses. His love for goodness was greater than his love for his brethren. If he did not instinctively trust a person, and especially a woman, he could only give a half-hearted sympathy—of duty, not of love. With a girl like this he felt a little angry; and yet it was not only for Poppy's sake that he felt obliged to understand and help her.

"No doubt old Tom will be very glad to see you," he said kindly. "But this road is lonely for a girl like you. If you are going, I would go at once, for it is getting darker every minute, and your grandfather will be anxious."

"Very well," Maggie said; and she moved away a few steps. But before he had reached the gate she turned back and called him.

"Mr. Cantillon, you don't believe in me one bit. You think I have been sitting on the stones here crying and waiting for somebody. Well, so I have."

The Rector stood still.

"Come with me," he said in his gentlest voice. "I am going to the Court, and I will see you home first."

Maggie came up close to him. Even his dim eyes could see in the twilight how pale she was, how recent tears had made her eyelids heavy, though her eyes shone even more brightly than usual.

"How kind you are!" she said, and there was a touch of that lightness of tone which always repelled him. "And yet you think me such a naughty girl. I'm not naughty—really I'm not—only miserable, and restless, and lonely, and discontented. Bad feelings, but I can't help them, can I? Let me go on, please; I know what you want to say. But I want to see Poppy. I never see her now—

do you know that, Mr. Cantillon? She has only once told me to come to the Court since Captain Nugent came—just once when he was away. She never comes to me now—except once with him, and that was worse than nothing. Don't speak to me, please. I'm unreasonable—but Poppy used to love me so much, and she told me that it would never make any difference, and it has just made this—she has given me up altogether. Oh, I love her just the same. And I know Poppy can't do things by halves. I dare say I should hate it if she did come now, wanting to go back to him all the time. Of course it doesn't matter. Only she is so different, and it hurts dreadfully, and I can't help crying when I am by myself. If I were to let grandfather know, I should never hear the last of it, and he would say such dreadful things. But really I don't know how to bear it. I suppose I ought just to swallow it all and say nothing. In fact, lots of people are made like that, I dare say. But I'm not, you see. Well, you know it all now. You found it out half for yourself, and I had to tell you, that you might not think of me worse than I deserved."

Her voice broke into a sob. Mr. Cantillon was deeply touched, and no instinct suggested to him that, though all Maggie said might be true, some deeper shadow of trouble, some absolutely secret cause of restless misery, might lie at the root of her sayings and doings now. He was not universally trustful, but he was not suspicious.

"Don't cry—don't cry," he said hastily. "My dear child, you are mistaken. Really and truly, I thought nothing at all. Poor thing, if you were older and had more experience, you would understand all this so much better. Yes, you would know that it is only a passing cloud—a very black one, to be sure—but you must believe that your friend's nature is not changed. She is the same woman, the same good, loyal soul who first cared for you. Trust her through this, and all will be right by-and-by. It is only that she is living just now in very dazzling sunshine, so that the old lights fade out of view for a time. Some day you will know all about it yourself. Now come with me—because, after all, why are you waiting here?"

He spoke fast, and not without confusion. He was half amused at the girl's childish outpouring, half ashamed of having

judged her too hardly. At the same time a vision of Fanny and her tea-table in the lighted room came vividly before him. She had asked him to come at half-past four, and it was later now.

"No, I won't come, thank you," Maggie said, and her voice was calm and soft as usual. "I must just wait to see her pass—she will come directly—and then I'll go straight home. I won't go to old Tom to-day."

"Quite right; your grandfather wants you more," said Mr. Cantillon.

As he walked away, losing sight of her instantly in the shadows when the gate clanged behind him, his mind was full of softened thoughts of Maggie.

After all, a girl capable of such strong affection might not make a bad wife. It would be very difficult to find a woman really worthy of Geoffrey Thorne. Two or three years hence, perhaps—if she gained in good sense. In the meanwhile it struck the Rector that a hint to Poppy of her friend's loneliness, conveyed discreetly through her aunt, would not do any harm to any one. It might suggest to Poppy's mind that selfishness lurks in the most absorbing, the most generous love, and to Maggie it might bring that crumb of comfort for which her affectionate young heart was so hungry.

UP THE NIGER.

THE romance of African travel is usually associated with the tropical regions of the coast and centre, its mystery with the Soudan, and its economic interest with the south. The average reader is little acquainted with the vast area of enterprise on the west coast and in the "hinterland" of what are called the Oil Rivers, now forming the British Protectorate of the Niger. Yet this has been the scene of British commercial and missionary effort for more than a generation, and it is also a region of great and varied interest.

Here is now established the Royal Niger Company, incorporated by Royal charter in 1887, and charged with the political and military administration, as well as with the commercial development, of the country. This was the first of the chartered British Companies ever engaged in the opening up of the Dark Continent.

A hundred years ago little was known about the Niger, and Mungo Park was, in 1796, the first British traveller to make

acquaintance with its waters. Some thirty years later, several others tried to follow up his discoveries, but without much success, until, in 1830, the two brothers, Richard and John Lander, descended the river from Boussa to one of its mouths. After this followed sundry commercial expeditions, undertaken by British merchants engaged in trade on the coast, and in 1854 a semi-Governmental exploration was made by Dr. Blaikie, R.N., of the Benue River, which is an affluent of the Niger.

This was the beginning of regular trade on the Niger, and the various commercial establishments originating between then and 1886 were incorporated in the National African Company, which in the year following became the Royal Niger Company, of which one hears so much at times in Parliament and in disputes with Frenchmen.

It was in consequence of the complaints made by Frenchmen and others about the state of affairs in the Niger Territories, that the British Government, in 1889, despatched Major (now Sir Claude) Macdonald to ascend the rivers Niger and Benue to the limits of the British Protectorate, to interview all the Chiefs, Kings, and Emirs, and to examine generally into the condition and administration of the Territories. From the narrative of this mission,* written by Sir Claude Macdonald's secretary, is to be gathered more interesting and accurate information about this region than has ever yet been presented to the British reader in compact form, and to it we are indebted for the basis of the present article.

The term "Oil Rivers" is collectively applied to the several more or less malaria-haunted streams by which the great river finds its way through the fetid swamps of the Niger Delta to the ocean. At the mouths of these rivers have for many years been established British trading-stations—known as "factories"—for the collection of palm-oil, which is bought from the natives in exchange for beads, cloths, cutlery, and such things, for shipment to Europe. One of these streams is the Bonny River, which sadly belies its name, and on the Bonny River is the "kingdom" of that dusky potentate, King George of Bonny, whom some of us can remember being lionised in London some thirty years ago.

* "Up the Niger." By Captain A. F. Mochler-Ferryman, F.R.G.S., etc. Published by Messrs. George Philip & Son.

Bonny is one of the most important stations on the Oil Rivers, but is, we are told, just about the most ghastly-looking spot that can be imagined. Half-a-dozen wooden stores form the station—the “factories” of the traders, all built on one plan, with a store on the ground-floor and dwelling-rooms above. The surrounding land for about one hundred yards is cleared of brush, and where not under water is packed with casks of palm-oil awaiting shipment. Beyond these clearances extend a dense bush and impassable mangrove-swamps, which stretch to an unknown distance.

The white trader never seeks to penetrate these pestilential shades, his only object being to complete as much trade in as short a time as possible, before his health succumbs to the deadly climate. His life is terribly monotonous—no amusement, no exercise, no variety—and at the end of eighteen months or so he usually finds himself compelled to return home, worn out with fever.

Now let us take a look at Bonny Town, the capital of the former pet of emotional ladies and gentlemen of an evangelical type. We shall take Captain Ferryman for our guide:

“Leaving the traders’ ‘beaches,’ a narrow path conducts us past the small English burial enclosure where lie the remains of, alas, many of our countrymen who have fallen victims to the fatal climate; on through fetid swamps and heavy bush, and a few hundred yards brings us to the town itself. A collection of about a couple of hundred ramshackle huts, irregularly built of mud and matting, stands amongst a grove of magnificent trees, with here and there a dense undergrowth of noxious mangrove. ‘Square-face’ gin-bottles lie scattered about the ground in all directions, showing too clearly the inclinations of the repulsive-looking inhabitants—a people saturated with the foulest of trade-gin—and a few old rusty guns, half buried in the swamps, complete the scene. Such is Bonny Town, whose king, as Burton tells us, succeeded thirty years ago in inducing the benevolent Christians of England to interest themselves to the tune of twenty thousand pounds in his behalf, providing him with a steam-launch and various English officials for his Court, and immortalising his Majesty in a hymn commencing:

Oh, who shall succour Bonny’s king?
The money went chiefly in drink, and the

duped officials were only too glad to return at once to England without their salaries.”

As a contrast to this revolting picture is the clean and attractive settlement of the Church Missionary Society, somewhat nearer the sea, and so long and—as we are told—well presided over by the late Bishop Crowther, the first black-man to be consecrated to the Anglican episcopacy. The Mission has plenty of work yet to do, for although the natives of the Niger Delta have had intercourse with white men for a couple of centuries, they are still in a deplorable state of moral and physical degradation. Within a few miles of the white settlements, jujus, fetish-worship, and cannibalism are still practised, and the wives of a dead chief are buried alive in the grave with him.

The largest and most navigable mouth of the Niger is the Nun, and upon the Nun is Akassa, which is the *dépôt* station of the whole of the Niger region administered by the Company, and which is the place where the steamers discharge their English cargoes and reload native produce for conveyance to various ports. This is a busy place, not without picturesque features, but a damp heat and the pestilential vapours from the mangrove-swamps make the climate so enervating that few Englishmen can stand it for any length of time. The native village is on the opposite side of the river, and is inhabited by an active people speaking the Brass language, who in former days bore an evil reputation as wreckers, but who now seem inoffensive enough, as “natives” go.

At Akassa the ascent of the Niger proper is begun, and after a few miles of dreary and deadly mangrove-swamps the scenery improves, and forests of palm and plantations of banana begin to appear. “Occasionally we catch a glimpse of a small group of square huts of mud and leaves on the bank, whose wild-looking and scantily-clothed inhabitants turn out to greet us with shouts and shaking of fists—their form of salutation—and occasionally a snap shot is got at a crocodile lying basking on the mud; but for the most part the scenery is monotonous, a wall of dark forest shutting out the view on either side of the river.”

Nothing attractive about the Niger so far, the reader will think. But wait. Passing through the Oru country, and the junction of the wide stream of the Wari with the Niger, we find the river

now presenting a nobler appearance, rolling down in one vast expanse, a mile or more wide, through banks covered with tall grass, around which may be seen the huts of the Ibo tribes, surrounded by their little plantations of yam, banana, and sugar-cane.

At intervals rise the immense white stems of the cotton-trees, and over all the river-bank hangs the virgin forest, interlaced with luxuriant creepers and orchids.

By-and-by is reached the trading-station of Abutahi, picturesquely placed on an overhanging cliff, and clothed with festoons of dark-green creepers drooping over the brick-red soil. Landing here, the travellers find a beautifully kept garden surrounding the white man's bungalow, from the balcony of which they look down in wonderment upon the scene below—the vast lake-like expanse of the rolling river dotted with little canoes and fringed in by dark belts of heavy forest. Here various experiments in cultivation are being made, and here also are to be found horses and cattle, which do not thrive on the Delta.

Not far from this place, however, is a sandbank in mid-stream which is—or rather was, for it has been lately suppressed by the Royal Niger Company—a noted slave-market. About sixty slaves per month used to be brought down here in canoes from the north, often from very great distances, and were sold to the tribes on the mainland. The price of a boy was about six pounds, of a girl five pounds, and of men and women somewhat less.

In this, the Ibo country, the villages are surrounded by a thick hedge, the only entrance being by a rough gateway of upright poles. Inside the gateway stands the fetish-house, and scattered about amongst the undergrowth and trees are the huts of the people, invisible from one another. From one end of the town to the other stretch grassy lanes shaded by giant trees festooned with creepers, and the silence is only broken by the occasional shrill call of a woman.

It was in such a town as this that Sir Claude Macdonald had his first interview with a native potentate—Akezia, the King of Onitsha—who had to be warned that "the Great White Queen" was much displeased with the barbarous conduct of his people, and insisted that slave dealing must cease and human sacrifices be discontinued.

The King faithfully promised to obey the command of the Great White Queen

whose word is law; but he is described as a pitiful, gin-bloated creature, addicted to drink from his earliest years, and so debilitated in mind and body that he is a ruler only in name. His Sable Majesty put on a good deal of "side," nevertheless, and kept the representatives of the Great White Queen waiting for some time before he admitted them to audience; then he received them, clothed in a single cloth, with a silk and velvet cap shaped like a crown on his head. At his feet lay an earthenware pot containing a cow's skull, and on a wooden framework in front of him hung a bell, a horse's tail, a bundle of short iron spears, and a few other jujus. The throne was a mud platform covered with a red rug, but the visitors had to seat themselves on empty gin-cases. The "Prince of Wales" was gravely introduced by the interpreter. This Prince is described as a fine lad of seventeen, clothed with a simple piece of rag hardly big enough for a lady's pocket-handkerchief; but the other Princes who appeared had evidently forgotten to dress themselves.

Again ascending the river, Asaba is reached, and this is the administrative head-quarters of the Chartered Company. Here reside the military and civil officials, and here are the Court of Justice, and the barracks and batteries of the Niger Constabulary. Experiments in cultivation are also being made at Asaba, but with less success than at Abutahi, as the soil is poor and sandy. Some English vegetables, however, seem to do fairly well.

The Constabulary barracks are built on high ground, a hundred feet or so above the river, and are admirably arranged—the parade-ground bordered by the officers' quarters and mess-house, while the men's quarters face the river. Between the barracks and the native town is a Roman Catholic Mission station, where are two Sisters, said to be the only two white ladies in the Niger Territories.

Here it should be mentioned that a "town" in the Ibo country consists of many villages and is ruled over by many separate chiefs. The native "town" of Asaba, for instance, contains some five hundred districts, or villages, each ruled over by a chief, who acknowledges no superior. They elect from their own number a senate of some fifty chiefs, who arrange the affairs of the town. These administrators are distinguished by wearing a red cap, and to qualify for a red cap, it was—prior to 1888—necessary

that a chief should have killed at least two human beings as a sacrifice. It was, moreover, the custom of this place that not less than three slaves must be offered up before a dead chief could be buried, and flocks of slaves were always held in reserve for the purpose. The sacrifices took place in the *joju* grove, where the skulls of the slain were left to bleach. But the grove has now been swept away, and human sacrifice is sternly forbidden by the representatives of the Great White Queen.

The Royal Niger Constabulary is a force of about five hundred men — Fantis, Hausas, and Yorubas, mostly from the Gold Coast — officered by Englishmen. They are well fed and well paid, their uniform is a khakki zouave dress, and they are armed with Snider rifles and sword bayonets. Besides the infantry, there is a battery of mountain-guns, commanded by an ex-gunner of the Royal Navy. They are all comfortably housed in the barracks at Asaba, with separate quarters for married and single; but they are frequently called out for very rough bush-fighting, and they always give a good account of themselves.

A day and a half's further steaming brings one to the large town of Ida, the capital of the Igara country. And now the character of the scenery changes once more. Little grass-hutted villages, like beehives, nestle among high-waving corn-fields; low, round hills covered with huge boulders and dark green vegetation crop up on both sides of the river; every now and again the passage seems barred by some accumulation of boulders; then after a while the river opens out again, and the town of Lokoja appears in the distance, at the base of a long range of table-topped mountains which stretch far away to the westward.

It is here that the mighty stream of the Benue River, flowing down from the north-east, swells the volume of the Niger.

This marks the limit of division between the regions known as the Lower Niger and the Middle Niger. The tribes of the Lower Niger, which we have just traversed, are divided for the most part into three great families — the Idz, the Ibo, and the Igara — and the greatest of these are the Ibo, subdivided into innumerable tribes.

The Ibo men are about five and a half feet high, and are muscular, strong, and healthy. The women, when young, are well formed, but when they reach the age

of twenty they become either very fat or very lean. An Ibo beauty must be excessively fat and have a well-polished ebony skin. They are cleanly in their habits, bathing frequently in the river, and are industrious after their fashion, and though they are not very good hunters, they are expert fishermen. Their dress is simple. The women wear strips of cotton cloth from the waist to the knee, and tie a bright-coloured handkerchief round the head. On the body they wear strings of pearls and black beads, and round the ankles, iron, brass, or ivory rings.

Ivory anklets, often very heavy, are only worn by the women of wealth and importance; but the metal anklets worn by others may be many pounds in weight, and some of them wear huge brass plates, perhaps a foot in diameter, which, once fixed on the ankles, are never removed. The men wear a single strip of cotton cloth, but those who come much in contact with the Europeans are now learning to wear trousers. Their weapons are flintlocks, bows, and spears, the latter both for hurling and thrusting.

The huts are built of mud and matting, and are quadrangular in shape. The centre is an open courtyard, at one end of which is the apartment of the head of the house, while the wives and family are accommodated in other rooms on the right and left of the courtyard. There is no furniture or ornament, and but a few household utensils and weapons.

The Ibos have a barbarous custom of destroying twins. A woman who gives birth to twins is regarded as something accursed, and the children are taken from her and thrown into the bush to perish, while she is proclaimed an outcast and driven from the village. To hold up two fingers to an Ibo woman is to offer her the greatest insult possible. They are very superstitious; they worship idols of wood, mud, and iron, which are regarded as protectors to be propitiated at various periods; and slavery exists among all the tribes.

The other great family of the Lower Niger, the Igaras, are also superstitious pagans, but they are not cannibals, and instead of destroying twins look upon them as lucky. Slavery also exists among them, and, indeed, it is supposed that the Igaras were originally slave-hunters from the Yoruba country, who wandered eastward in search of slaves and game.

Lokoja, at the confluence of the Niger and Benue, is, unlike any of the towns lower down, peopled by Mohammedans. It is dirty, but in many respects superior to the Lower Niger towns. In the outskirts are the houses of the Chartered Company and of the Missions. It is an important and convenient trading-station, being at the junction of two great waterways, so the population is constantly changing. The huts are built pretty close together, and the lanes are narrow, so that Lokoja does not occupy as much space as other Niger towns, although it is one of the most populous.

Lokoja is situated at the foot of Mount Patte, a flat-topped hill of some one thousand two hundred feet high, from which may be seen long ranges of table-topped mountains stretching north and west along the line of the Middle Niger, otherwise called the Kworra. Below Lokoja flows in the Benue River from the east, forming at the point of junction a sheet of water three miles wide.

The Macdonald Mission was continued up the Kworra, and also up the Benue, with many important and interesting results, which space will not allow us to follow.

One finds on the Niger little evidence of the marvellous wealth which is supposed to be locked up in Africa. There seem to be no valuable minerals, the supply of ivory is diminishing, and besides palm-oil, the only natural products are rubber, gum, gutta-percha, and a few seeds. It remains to be seen what can be made out of cultivation of the uplands; but in any case Captain Ferryman says they are unsuited for European colonisation.

A COLD SNAP.

A WESTERN SKETCH.

OUR bugbear out West during the winter months was "Zero."

The first thing in the morning and the last thing at night we would anxiously enquire of each other, "How about Zero?" But it was not affection that prompted the question.

Many a time during the reign of that autocratic monarch have I got out of bed in sheer desperation at about three or four in the morning, and set a match to the fire to try and get a little warmth, and been shortly joined by two shivering boys, with their teeth chattering with cold, and we three have dozed over the stove, a miserable

trio, only moving to put fresh wood on, till the daylight came.

So that it was with anything but joy that I hailed the boys' dictum as they came in to supper one January night, that there would be a "cold snap" before morning.

This being the case, however, there was nothing to be done except to prepare for it, so we set to work and got in all the cut up logs, brought all the milk in and set it upon the top of the stove, emptied every jug containing liquid in the house, filled all the kettles, and put the breakfast steak into a pail of water to "freeze out." Also, whilst the boys were wrapping up the horses in all the old rugs they could find, I hunted up every available blanket and "comfort," which last consisted of sheets of cotton wool, or "batten," as it was called, quilted into cretonne bags, to put upon our beds.

When it was time for them to be coming in, I snatched up my fur cape and went to the door.

It was bitterly cold even then, and it was only eight p.m. I dreaded to think what it would be during the small hours of the morning. As it was the air was so keen that it seemed to take one's breath away. All was very still, nothing to be heard except the howl of a coyote near the corral—sure sign of a bitter night—and the roar of an approaching train on the track, shaking our little wooden home as it rushed past. The stars were shining brightly in a sky so blue that it looked quite black, except where, over the foothills, large groups of heavy clouds were massing together, and looked full of snow and threatening in the bright moonlight. On the clothes line, the weekly wash, usually left out all night to bleach, was hanging stiff and stark, looking very comical against the sky; and as I held up my finger to see if there was any wind, a single flake of snow fluttered against it, and stung it with its extreme cold.

I went in and made up the fire, and presently, when the boys came in from the corral, we shut up and made all snug, piled up a roaring fire, and went to bed, I tucking the oven shelf with me, which made a capital warm spot to lie upon when wrapped in a blanket. Talk of undressing to go to bed! I always had to dress up in a long flannel gown, a pair of the boys' shooting stockings, and a knitted hood—the last a very necessary precaution, for if the top of your head began to ache with the

cold, good-bye to all idea of sleep for that night—and so, thoroughly fortified, I fell asleep.

Not for long, however, did I sleep, but when I awoke, feeling as if my feet were solid lumps of ice, with my hands aching with the cold, I saw a grey glimmer of light through the unshuttered window, and heard the crackling of the fire—oh, welcome sound!—and the boys' voices in the kitchen. I jumped up and dressed myself as best I might, with fingers almost too cold to get my things on. As for washing, that was out of the question till there was some water thawed; and my hands were too cold to do my hair. So I gave my face a hasty wipe over with Florida water, rolled my hair up somehow, and got to the fire.

In the next room the poor boys were in the same plight as myself, but the fire was at any rate alight, although there was not much warmth in it, and the ice in the kettle—for it had frozen even on the top of the stove—was gradually melting, although each kettle had still a solid ball of ice in it, whilst the melted water inside had not even the chill off. In taking up the kettle, too, in an unguarded moment, the cold of the iron handle was so intense that when I put it down again a long strip of flesh from the inside of my hand adhered to it. It was dreadfully painful, and my brother told me never to touch iron during a "cold snap" without gloves on, adding, "You will be wiser next time!"

Yes, I certainly should; but just at that moment I was suffering rather badly from want of knowledge, and felt too cross to rejoice in the idea of another time. The milk on the stove was still a solid lump of ice, the water was chilly, the fire gave out but little warmth, I felt utterly miserable and wished myself a thousand times home in dear old England. But just then the sun came out, and one of the boys, looking out of the window, exclaimed: "Why, here are sundogs in the sky; you must come out and see them!"

This drove my thoughts, luckily for me, off my miserable self, and I snatched up a shawl and we all rushed out to see the sight. I had often heard and read of sundogs, and expected to see something very wonderful; but strictly speaking the truth, I was much disappointed in what I saw. They were nothing, after all: a small sun with rays around it on either side of the real one. The boys told me, however, that they were only seen in extreme cold, and certainly it had regis-

tered thirty degrees below zero that night. As we all stood looking at them, however, they grew fainter and fainter, and presently were only like two pale reflections of the sun.

Then we went in, and found that we had been out for some time; the kettle was by this time boiling, and we shortly had some coffee, which warmed us up; then the boys departed to do the chores, and I set about getting some breakfast, after having a refreshing "wash and brush up." But alas! our troubles were not over yet. When I went to take the bread out of the pan, it was frozen hard, as hard as a brick. I got the axe, and with much toil hacked a loaf to bits and put it into the oven to thaw. I had not sufficient vitality in me at that moment to make biseuit, the porridge was melting by slow degrees, and the beefsteak was being thawed out by being placed in several relays of water, till no crust of ice gathered on the top of the pail, after which it was ready for cooking. As for fried potatoes, we had to do without them; the very cream was frozen, and we had neat little lumps of ice cream in a bowl to put into the coffee. When breakfast had been disposed of and cleared away, the sun was high up and shining brightly, but the "dogs" had quite disappeared, the sky was a bright blue, and the frozen atmosphere, as it was called, was falling all around us in shining silver flakes, whilst the animals had fringes of ice on their manes and round their mouths. But by the middle of the day this had all disappeared, and the sun had so much power, that I had to take off my flannel blouse and put on a cotton one, and then sat on the wood pile knitting, with nothing over my shoulders. Everywhere in the sun the ice had melted, and it was much warmer outside the shanty than inside, even with a fire. Then, after dinner, the boys, who in "big snows" have little to do except feeding the cattle, said they would drive me into the Rock to get our mail and some stores whilst the road was still passable, for we should have more snow in a day or two. So we wrapped up well and drove off, meeting in the little town several of our friends, who had also taken advantage of a slack day. One poor girl was in the drug store having her foot seen to; she had ridden in, and on dismounting found her right foot useless—it had got frost-bitten whilst hanging over her pommel. I soon did my shopping; in fact, there were only three stores in the

place: a dry goods store, a meat market, and the drug store, belonging to the doctor, who also "ran" the post office. I rather liked the shopping. You helped yourself to apples or candy, and were usually offered a glass of cider or cigars by the storekeeper. Being a woman, I used to be offered chewing gum, and one called "Tati Fruti" was the favourite brand. I did not care much for it myself, but one could always bestow it on some one else, and to accept it was the custom of the country. The gentleman who kept the dry goods store was very kindly and obliging, and, moreover, always conformed to my European ideas by carrying my parcels across to the buggy, if the boys were not with me; and he it was who, on seeing me struggling to hitch up our team on the first occasion I drove them into town myself, came to the rescue with, "I guess you are a tenderfoot, stranger."

Towards three the wind began to get up, and after a glance at the sky the boys decided to start home at once, to race the snow, as they said. I was quite ready, for I had no wish to experience a blizzard, of which I had heard fearful tales, across our lonely prairie road; so not even stopping to read our mail—and it is only those far away in foreign lands who know what home letters really mean—we wrapped ourselves up again and started, one of the town girls kindly providing me with a hot roast potato to put into my muff.

Off we went, and, once out of the shelter of the little city, we felt the full violence of the wind. It blew, and blew, till we could not see the railway track by our side for dusty snow, which began now to fall fast, and was blown about in perfect little whirlwinds.

It was certainly a small misery, but there was no keeping out the fine powdery snow, and wrap the buffalo robes as we would round us, the snow found its way in. It got down our collars, and into our hair, and up our jacket sleeves—nay, it even worked into the bottom of the buggy, and after that there was no keeping our feet warm. I had a veil on, but it got under the boys' cowboy hats and into their ears, whilst one's eyes ached almost past endurance with the keenness of the wind and the glare of the snow. We were glad when we reached the end of our journey, and knew that our own gate lay on the other side of the Santa Fé track.

Here another danger awaited us, for the snow falling so fast, and being so recent,

we could not see the rails; and a freight train coming round a steep curve, and being in a deep cutting, was almost upon us before we realised it.

The brakeman could not see us, so sounded no cattle horn; but fortunately for us it was running slowly, with a snow-plough on it, so that the boys had time to jump out and drag the horses back. The snow-plough being already on, confirmed us in the belief that a "big snow" was expected, as did also the sight of a crowd of "outside" cattle standing at the fence of the buck-pasture.

These poor brutes, called "outside" because they feed on the range outside the ranch, and are only "rounded up" in the spring and autumn, have the greatest terror of a big storm, and instinct seems to tell them when to expect it, and they will crowd together near the fences for hours before it comes. Well may they dread it, for although a "cow brute" will eat anything and everything, still hundreds of them "go up," as the saying is, in a severe winter, and are left on the prairie till the coyotes devour their carcasses and their bones whiten the bluffs. But the greatest enemies they have to contend with are, after all, those of their own kind, who, as soon as they get too "skin poor" to stand, will push them over and then gore them to death with their horns; and the horns of a full-grown Texan steer are weapons not to be despised.

Certainly, advocates of the doctrine of the "survival of the fittest" should go on a western prairie in snow time to see it carried out with the utmost callousness and rigour. Their sufferings, too, when thrown off the track by the cow-catcher are great. There they lie and moan in agony, day and night, till the section agent—I had nearly written angel—comes with a merciful bullet to put an end to them.

You may not shoot them unless they belong to you, and you are willing to forego the compensation until the agent has been round and certified that their injuries really come from being thrown off the track, and then the railway company allow twenty or twenty-five dollars, as the case may be, to the owner of the dead animal. But the inside cattle must have been the greatest sufferers from the cow-catcher, for, now I come to think of it, the injured cow was always described by its master as in "full milk, and the finest animal he had in his outfit!"

It used to be very pitiful to hear the poor things moaning all night, for we were close to the track; I used to stuff my ears with cotton wool sometimes not to do so. Yet you were helpless when the poor creature belonged to some one else, and could do nothing except give it a little water now and again, when it would look at you so sadly with its large dark eyes that I dreaded going near it.

When we got home I ran recklessly to the stove, which was still in—for we had invested in half a ton of coal that winter—and held my hands to it for warmth. And then I got what is called the "hot-ache," such dreadful pain in my fingers that it was quite too much for my powers of endurance, which were, I am ashamed to say, never very great. The pain brought tears into my eyes, and I screamed for the boys, wondering if I had got frost-bitten also. They came running in, and when they heard what was the matter, got a pail of cold water and plunged my hands into it, and after I had held them in for some time the pain went away—a lesson to me never to hold my hands to the fire on coming in from a cold drive.

By this time it was blowing a perfect hurricane, and the force of the wind may be estimated by the fact that a sudden gust took up our wash boiler, which held when full about six gallons of water, and whirled it like a leaf into the corn patch, fully a hundred and fifty feet off.

It also blew some of the shingles off the roof, and the boys looked grave at this, for if a big storm was coming, and the wind once got inside the shanty, it would take the roof off bodily.

So, in spite of the wind and the fast falling snow, one of them got upon the roof and nailed some "two by four" deal boards on, whilst the other "bedded up" the animals in the corral and milked. The air was thick with snow, coming down now in huge flakes which drifted in all directions, and as the boys came in, they asked for a ball of strong string, which they took back to the corral with them. Then we shut up for the night, well pleased that we had a shelter over us, and plenty of good food and firing.

Our day's work was, however, not ended; for, as the boys went into their room to tidy for supper, I heard a call, and on going in found that the place on the roof where the shingles had been blown off was just over the bed, which was, consequently, covered with snow.

Luckily it was so dry and powdery that it readily shook off, and we were not long that evening before we went off to bed, making up—for we felt we were going to have exceptional weather—the kitchen fire with our treasured coal, and leaving the doors open into the kitchen to get the benefit of the stove, which the boys promised to keep going all night.

So they must have done, though I have no recollection of it, for I awoke in a fright to the sound of the crackling of logs, in what seemed to me to be the middle of the night. But it was seven in the morning, only it was dark with the snow which was still falling fast and drifting with the wind. They had already been out and dug around the well, and made a path to the "dug-out," as we called the larder; but the corral lay still further away, and, as the saying goes, you could not see your hand before your face, whilst the little shanty shook at intervals with the violence of the wind.

"How will you ever get to the animals?" I asked in despair, and then I learnt that over night Jack had tied the end of the ball of string to the stable, and fastened the other end to the well, and hoped by this means to grope their way along to the corral.

"Old man Conant always did this in a big snow," he said briefly.

Jack, unlike his brother, was a boy of few words, and they both of them started off armed with bucket, lantern, and spade. As may be supposed, seeing to the cattle took no end of time; it was useless attempting to bring them to the well for water. All the water had to be packed over to them, and it was lucky we had several days' "chop" prepared, and some hay under shelter, for it would have been impossible to get at the stacks; so it was fully dinner-time before the boys got any rest. However, I had a nice dinner for them: roast beef, Yorkshire pudding, stewed tomatoes, and cranberry tart and cream, and—oh, joy of joys!—a bottle of Milwaukee beer, on which I had wickedly and extravagantly spent one-and-three in English money.

Still the snow came down, and about half-past two we lit the lamp again, having put it out at twelve a.m. Sometimes in a lull of the storm we would hear the shriek of the trains, going very slowly up the tracks; but after an hour that stopped, and we knew that, for a time, traffic was suspended. We had the dogs inside—

poor beasts—and the boys smoked and read, and I wrote home.

I think we all rather enjoyed our rest time; it was very snug and comfortable in the little shanty.

Towards evening the wind abated, but it still snowed steadily on, and there was no sun to be seen all that day. We got out the County Brand Book, and amused ourselves by trying to invent a new brand for cattle, which we succeeded in doing, thereby earning five dollars—always a welcome sum. The invention of a cattle brand, also, is by no means so easy as it would appear, as any one who has studied a brand book can testify, every figure, and letter, or combination of figures and letters, would seem to have been used over and over again, and we went to bed well satisfied with our labours.

Next morning we awoke to twenty below zero, and the sun shining brightly on so white a world that the boys put on blue spectacles to prevent snow blindness. They had plenty to do in the way of feeding the chores; but of ranch work proper there would be no more till the snow went, months hence. But it was soon snowing hard again, and the coyotes were beginning to pack, elk had been seen on the Hunt Ranch, and mountain lion and bear in the foothills; the boys would have some sport. A bear even got venturesome enough to come round the corrals when they were milking; but he did not return to his family. We cured his skin—which was a very fine one—in a primitive way with wood ashes; and that, a rug of coyote skins, and a pair of antlers we retain even now, as a little memento of the most severe "cold snap" we ever experienced.

INTERVIEWERS AND INTERVIEWING.

IN days of old, men in search of adventure sailed with Drake, or with Pizarro, or even with Columbus. We have changed all that. Nowadays, men who want their fill and more than their fill of adventures become interviewers—in the United States. In the land of the stars and bars there is nothing which an interviewer, in search of an interview, will not do to gain his end. Possibly you have already seen this story in print. A certain "citizen of eminence" had the misfortune to have an argument with another "citizen of eminence." This other "citizen of eminence" conducted his

share of the argument by means of a "gun"—with six barrels. Some of these barrels he emptied into that esteemed fellow-citizen who ventured to differ. The newspapers were anxious to know all about the affair; they wished to interview both the parties. It was easy to interview one of them, because he was in jail, and, in the States, "eminent" prisoners who are awaiting their trials are regarded as a sort of show, and a "high-class show" at that, and are, of course, accessible to interviewers; but in the case of the other party there were—well, there were obstacles in the way.

The misfortune in his case was that, although he had not been quite killed, he had been all but. With him it was a question of life or death, with the odds on death. Enterprising editors of enterprising prints felt that "An Interview with the Slaughtered Victim on his Deathbed" would sell their papers like red-hot cakes; but as it was well understood, and, indeed, had been officially announced, that for the "Slaughtered Victim" perfect quiet was absolutely essential, since the slightest excitement would produce immediately fatal results, it was felt, and rightly felt, that there were obstacles in the way. It was not a question of delicacy. With delicacy, of course, the interviewer has nothing at all to do, else, long ere this, his class had become as extinct as the dodo. He desires to find his way into the most private places. With your leave, or without your leave, that desire of his he does his best to realize.

No, the obstacle in this case had, as a matter of course, nothing at all to do with delicacy. The difficulty was this: Not only did the interviewer find himself unable to penetrate into the "Slaughtered Victim's" bedchamber, but it even seemed impossible to get into his house. Worse still, the "Slaughtered Victim" resided in a "brown stone" mansion, and no one outside the house knew in which part of it he was located. No one knew if he was "facing the music" or preparing to "face the music," in the back or in the front, in a garret or in the basement. The secret was well kept; the interviewers did not even know which of the windows to keep their eyes on, until one of them arose and showed the stuff that was in him.

Merit always comes to the front, suggests Dr. Smiles, and there is nothing like "self-help."

It is in emergencies that a strong man

shows his strength, and in that emergency a strong man showed his. This Prince of Interviewers—may his name, and the deed he did, always be as a sweet savour in the nostrils of all good interviewers!—got on the soft side of a female “help”—let us say, somehow. He learned from her in what room the wounded man lay fighting for his life. Not only so. He succeeded in persuading her to see that the window of the room was left unlatched, and that a loophole was left in the blind or the curtains so that a Peeping Tom without might see something of what was going on within. The room was at the back of the house. One night that Prince of Interviewers gained the window-sill—by means which showed how great a man he truly was. Hour after hour he stood on that sill and watched. At last he saw the nurse in attendance leave the room. In an instant he had the window open. He called to the figure which was lying motionless in bed. No answer. He had to call again. He had to call and to call. He had to open the window wide. He had to thrust his head into the room. And, at last, he gained his end. The figure in the bed sat up. The “Slaughtered Victim” looked at the head thrust through the window, one may well believe, with eyes of horror. He uttered an exclamation—only one—then sank back into bed. That Prince of Interviewers could not induce him to make another movement, or to utter another sound. And for a sufficient reason—he was dead. That interview had finished what his eminent friend’s “gun” had commenced. It had killed him.

That is how the story is told. You think it is incredible? If you do, it is because you have not an intimate acquaintance with the methods, and the deeds, of American interviewers. It would be news to you to learn how “eminent citizens” upon their honeymoon are chased by them from pillar unto post. Max O’Rell tells how, at night, an interviewer forced his way into his bedroom, and insisted upon interviewing him in his nightshirt. But that is nothing. Ladies, more than once, have been treated in the same fashion. A famous French actress was interviewed in her bath—before it, during it, and after it. The interviewer in this case was a “lady;” but does that make the thing more savoury? That “lady” interviewer described the whole process with the most amazing minuteness. She described everything that the actress took off and everything that she

put on, and exactly how she put it on. It was wonderful! The cream of the thing was, that the interview appeared in a Sunday paper. For the matter of that, almost precisely the same thing has been done in England. An actress—again a Frenchwoman—was interviewed, in London, under practically the same conditions, and in practically the same manner. The interview appeared in a high-priced “society paper.”

The plague of interviewing has spread to England. We fear the cholera; but this other pest, which, I verily believe, is at least as serious, we seem to welcome. “Eminent” correspondents pride themselves on tricking the Sultan of Turkey into an interview, or on “getting a rise” out of the Pope—the Holy Father, the Keeper of the Keys! Already interviewing is becoming, even in England, a regular profession. Train your son for it. Why not?

Interviewing has not yet come to mean the same thing in England which it means, and which it has long meant, in the States, though there are eminent hands among us who appear willing, in this matter, to tread hard on the heels of our American cousins. In England, as yet, the rule—to which there are already exceptions—is courtesy. If you are unwilling to be interviewed, your unwillingness is respected. You receive a polite request to allow yourself to figure in “Our Gallery of Notorieties.” Sometimes this is a temptation straight from the evil one himself. Jones had no idea that he was a notoriety until he was in receipt of that request. It is not in Jones’s flesh and blood to refuse to occupy a niche in hagiology if canonisation is to be obtained by acceding to an interview. In the case of Jones the interviewer probably finds himself in clover. Yet, ungratefully enough, the interviewers declare that the Joneses are thorns in their flesh. It is true that the eminent hand is received as though he were a prince, is made much of, and is treated to the best that Jones has to offer. Jones will “show off” to him, in fact. But that is not what that eminent hand wants. He will tell you, afterwards, that Jones would not allow him to get a word in edgeways. He kept gas, gas, gassing! Because it must always be remembered that an interviewer does not want to put into his interview what you want, but what he wants. A surgical operation could not have made Jones see this. He would persist in talking about what interested

him, and not about what interested the interviewer—or, rather, the interviewer's public. The poor man did not realise the situation. The interviewer did not really wish to glorify Jones. Not a bit of it! The hint in that direction was only a bait for the hook. What he really wished to do was to tickle the palates of his readers, and so to earn, perhaps, an honest five-pound note. Jones was only a subject—one of many; the lay figure about which the artist—the interviewer—had to group his properties. If he only knew it, the interviewer found him a dreadful trial—Jones!

What a combination of qualities an interviewer must require! On second thoughts, perhaps, you had better make sure that your son is a genius before you start upon his training. It is to be understood that there are different sorts of interviewers. There is the interviewer—a familiar type in the States—who lets you know that you had better let him interview you, or you will be sorry; and that you had better answer all his questions, or you will be sorrier still. This is the sort of man, who, when he finds that burglary is vain, and that by no means, criminal or otherwise, can he gain access to you, will rise superior to circumstances, and publish a flourishing account of the interview, although he never had one. Quilpen, the well-known author, congratulates himself that he has choked the scoundrel off, until he opens the "Morning Scandal," and finds that it contains a four-column interview with—Quilpen! Such an interview! That interviewer has got more than even with Quilpen after all. None of your truckling for him. None of your sickly adulation of his subject in which some interviewers think proper to indulge. He is candid—even to a fault. He tells the world frankly what he thinks of Quilpen's appearance, his manners, and his insufferable conceit. No one, he explains, but a Briton would have ventured to treat a representative—an accredited representative—of the great American press with such ignorant insolence. Then he goes on to say what Quilpen told him. Quilpen's hair turns grey, his face turns green. He knows that interview will be copied, possibly the wide world over, that it will be read at home. He finds himself credited with the statement that nobody can write but—Quilpen! He finds himself reported to have said that all other living scribes, men at whose feet he sits and worships,

are rogues and impostors. Through column after column he is proved, out of his own mouth—for his words are supposed to have been taken down as they came from him, verbatim—to have figured as a foul-mouthed libeller and an impudent charlatan.

The great and varied qualities of which that type of interviewer must be master, of course, are manifest. But that is a type which has not yet made its presence appreciably felt upon this side. We shall be coming to it by-and-by. In the meantime you need not require your son to be capable of a flight quite so lofty. The type of interviewer who is most in vogue in England is the interviewer courteous—the lackey type. That is what your son will require if he is ever to attain front rank in his profession—the lackey instinct. You imagine that I am making an unkind suggestion? Not in the least. Consider the matter.

Your son will have to interview, let us say, the Duke of Buncombe. Such things have been. They interview Dukes as if they were commoners. Everybody knows what sort of man the Duke of Buncombe is. To put it gently, he is not a nice man. His recommendations are that he is the head of a great family, is possessed of great wealth, and that he is a patron of what is called, ironically, sport, and also of what is called, with equal irony, the drama. But he is not a nice man—quite the other way. Do you suppose that your son will be allowed to even hint at the noble Duke's want of—shall we say niceness? In America such a thing might be possible. There they have a way of saying plain things even about dignities. In England, no!

He is notoriously not nice; and it is because he is notorious that your son's employer sees his way to turn him into promising copy. So that boy of yours is told off to do him. That young man must be richly endowed with the spirit of the lackey, or he would scarcely have been given such a task. His employer knows full well that a gentleman—a man, even, with any of the instincts of a gentleman—would not have been equal to the business. The interviewer, in such a case, must be endowed with the spirit of a lackey, because he will have to submit to being treated like a lackey. He will have to treat the noble Duke with deference, and with something more than deference. If the noble Duke is

in a mood to snub him—and he will be—he will have to allow himself to be snubbed. If the noble Duke desires to wipe his boots on him, he must suffer him to wipe them—and your son must say, with proper piety, Amen. And, after all, your son's interview, when it appears in print, will be as purely an effort of the imagination as was that American genius's interview with Quilpen. He never dare set down, in black and white, the interview as it actually took place. Think of the noble Duke's well-known propensity to idiom. No. The interview, as published, will have to please the public, your son's employer, and the Duke. As for verisimilitude, interviews are supposed to be pictures from the life. As a matter of fact, the supposition is merely supposition, for that is what they never are. If they were pictures from the life, some people would keep interviewers away from them with tooth and nail, with sword and gun—some of the very people who now welcome them with open arms.

Have you noticed how the ordinary interview, as it is known in England, is apt to read very much as if it were a catalogue of furniture? Some of the interviews—and some of those, too, which seem to be the most widely appreciated—are practically nothing else. The interviewer, in these cases, appears to have interviewed the house, not its owner. He tells you what is in the hall, up the stairs, on the landings, in all the rooms, the kitchens, and the servants' bedrooms. If the house is in the country, he describes the stables and the dairy, the pigs and the poultry. The interviewer might, for all the world, have been a broker's man taking an inventory. This sort of interview reads like nothing so much as some of the advertisements of old George Robins. The interviewer advertises freely, right and left. The suite in the drawing-room is one of the best efforts of So-and-so; the sideboard in the dining-room is one of the finest productions of Such-and-such.

There is another thing to be noticed: how much the interviews are like each other. Some of "Our Notorieties" have, of course, been interviewed again and again. They deserve it, and more. The great Bluffham, for instance, has been interviewed dozens of times. He appears to be a favourite mark for interviewers. I am beginning almost to suspect that Bluffham must encourage them. Although these interviews have been conducted,

presumably, by different interviewers, there is one feature which is common to them all. That is a pair of boots which were once worn by the great Jimborough, and which were presented to the great Bluffham by the great Vanbones. Though I have never had the honour of crossing Bluffham's threshold, I know exactly in what portion of his premises those boots are to be found. I not only know the exact room, but I know the exact spot in the room. I ought to. We all ought to; and whenever I see that Bluffham has been interviewed again, I immediately read that interview in order to see if those boots are where they were. They always are. Each interviewer seems to behold them with glad surprise. He never seems to have heard of them before—never! He tells you all about them with a little air which seems to suggest that now, if ever, he is giving you a piece of information which is really new. He tells you all about the occasion on which the great Jimborough wore those boots. He tells you how the boots came into the possession of the great Vanbones. He tells you of the graceful manner in which Vanbones presented the boots to his old friend Bluffham. Every interviewer does it, each in his turn. If the interview appears in an illustrated paper, ten to one there is a picture of the boots. If those who are gone are allowed to revisit these mortal shades, and the great Jimborough knows what is going on, he must feel flattered. And think of the simpering satisfaction of the man who made the boots! Was he ever paid for them? It is charming, charming! Some of the possessions of "Our Notorieties" we love as though they were our own. Are they not familiar in our mouths as household words? Are they not the dearest of old friends?

There is still another thing to be noticed in the interviews—as they are to be found in England—how colourless they are! They tell us nothing. Presumably, the original idea was that the interview should show us our great folks as they really are—introduce us to them, indeed; make them our friends; enable us to realise that, after all, they are, like ourselves, creatures of flesh and blood.

I wonder how many interviews I have read with Snogson. Do I know him? If I do, I am sorry for Snogson. I cannot conceive how a man of that sort can have done the things which he has done. The general impression conveyed to my mind,

from the interviews, is, that Snogson is a wretched imitation of a tailor's dummy. Much more interesting creatures of flesh and blood were to be found at Mrs. Jarley's. Poor Snogson! How his modesty impresses the interviewer—quite painful! He tells the interviewer the story of his life—such a story! it leaves the stories in the Sunday school books out of the running!—and he points to his most cherished possession. Snogson's most cherished possession, as, of course, you are aware, is the magnificent silver vase presented to him by the Rajah of Ahmedmyga; it is twenty-three inches high, and bears an inscription detailing Snogson's virtues, both inside and out—with an air of modesty which almost brings tears into the interviewer's eyes. Every interviewer is struck by Snogson's graceful, and, indeed, gracious bearing; also by that air of reserve which appears to be natural to Snogson. Considering his modesty, and his reserve, it is curious how, directly you find yourself in Snogson's presence, you are conscious that you are in the presence of a remarkable man—very odd indeed! Snogson never made an enemy, not one—so the interviewers say. He is popular everywhere—always has been. Not that he stands in awe of public opinion—quite the other way. Snogson cares for nobody's opinion, except his own—so the interviewers say. Snogson is the sort of man you never have met, and never will meet—out of the interviews. There, it seems likely, you will continue to meet him for some time to come. All "Our Notorieties" are like him—so the interviewers say. They are, every man Jack of them, miserable imitations of tailors' dummies. It is amazing how such a set of invertebrates can ever have come to the front. In our lunatic asylums there must be finer examples of mental health and vigour.

The profession of the interviewer is a great profession—an alluring one, a grand one. Train up your sons to it, do! Especially the fool of the family. He will doubtless show the strongest natural bent, for he will not improbably have the thickest skin. It is a profession which calls for the continual exercise of the highest qualities with which a man can be endowed. The interviewer stands in the front rank among men of letters; he is the ideal literary man; he is the "hero worshipper" among the moderns—yes, that he is indeed! Let a man only show that he possesses heroic qualities in any

direction, either in crime or coxcombry, down goes the interviewer, flop upon his knees. He is the concentration of the modern spirit of reverence; and his sympathies are so wide; his prejudices nil; he is all things to all men, the mildest-mannered man that ever cut a throat; you can kick him—he has been kicked, they say, at times—he will not kick you back again. It sounds strange, but it would be the ruination of his character if he did. Not one of "Our Notorieties" would grant him another interview if the thing got known. He is not such an emasculated being in the States—would, sometimes, that he were!—but as he exists in England, the interviewer is a charming man, and quite the gentleman, you know!

WITH THE QUARRYMEN.

A COMPLETE STORY.

LOUIS RAUX was the name by which he was entered on the list of those employed in the slate quarry at Rochehaut; but, among us quarrymen he was generally spoken of as *Le Français*, because he was the only one of us who came from over the frontier. He was a chap ready enough with his tongue, whether for a joke, or a squabble, or a bit of gossip; but for all that he was not what you may call communicative, and we knew little of him except his nationality. He made his first appearance on our works one August morning, just as I, Gilbert Masson, had come out of the quarry to ask a question of Pierre Pascal, the foreman. We saw him coming along the road which runs between the river bank and the steep wooded hill, and as the road ends at our quarry, we knew he was coming to us. He was a square-set, strong-looking chap about middle height, and, as near as I could guess, about thirty years of age. His hair was black, and under his stubbly moustache you could see a thin, stubborn-looking mouth. His eyes were small, and very light for the rest of his face; but I never saw eyes that changed so quickly according to his mood of the moment. This, of course, I didn't observe till afterwards.

It was not often that a stranger came our way, so Pascal broke off short with what he was telling me, and looked for him to say what his business was.

"I'm on the tramp after work," he began curtly, "and I hear you are un-

commonly busy here. Perhaps you can put me on."

"Busy we are," replied Pascal, "but it don't follow we can put you on. Skilled hands is what we're short of, and somehow you haven't to me the look of a slate-dresser."

"I'm not likely to have," the other rejoined, "seeing I never touched a block of slate in my life, but," he went on eagerly, "I'm sick of tramping, and if you're so busy surely you've an odd job for a man who's down on his luck." He didn't look down on his luck. His clothes and his boots were tidy; he didn't even look badly fed. Yet something in his face told me he was not humbugging.

Pascal had a wonderful soft heart. He never could bear to say "nay" to any man. But he couldn't turn a tramp into a slate-dresser by pitying him. He pushed back his cap and scratched his grizzled head for a moment, then he looked doubtfully at me.

"I've thought before now of taking Martin Pirlot into the dressing-shed," he began.

"I know you have," I said. "But that'd be robbing Peter to pay Paul. We should be short of some one to load the trucks at the facing."

"Not if I put him on," he said, nodding his head toward the stranger. "Now, look here, my lad, there's a chance for you, and you need no skill beyond a pair of strong arms. You can load the trucks in the shaft and run them out to the workshops, where you'll have to unload. The pay comes to about twenty francs a week."

He paused. I could see he expected to be heartily thanked. But the stranger only raised his bushy eyebrows and nodded his head.

"If it isn't good enough," began Pascal again, half huffed, "you've no need to take it."

"That's all you know about it," said the other. "It'd be better for me if I hadn't."

"Do you mean it's a bargain, then?" asked Pascal. And when the stranger made a sign of assent, he went on: "If so, Masson here will be your butt, and as long as he reports well of you you've no call to go on tramp again. Now come along into the office and let me enter you on the book."

I waited till that was done, and then I led the way into the workings.

Our Rochehaut quarry is one of the oldest in the province of Luxembourg. For more than two centuries the shafts have pierced their way further and further back into the slate bed in the mountain-side. The facing at which we were then working lay about a hundred and fifty metres from the daylight, along a horizontal shaft which sloped slightly inwards. This shaft and one or two old ones are all entered from a kind of cavern or grotto on a level with the river. This grotto is always cool and dim, even on the hottest summer day, and it has, moreover, a kind of solemnity for us quarrymen, for over the dark mouth of the shaft, on a rough shelf, there gleams out of the twilight a figure of Sainte Barbe, our patron saint, and on either side the saint a vase of wild flowers. The figure is older than the oldest quarryman; no one knows how long it has stood there; but Christophe Delhogne, the hunchback, is responsible for the flowers. He has all sorts of ideas, and one idea was these vases. We none of us made any objection; rather the contrary.

I stopped at the shaft mouth to light candles for myself and the new hand. As I gave him his I saw his eyes fixed on the figure above us, and a sneering smile on his lips.

"Sacré nom!" he cried in mock astonishment. "What on earth is that?"

"It is Sainte Barbe, our patroness," I replied, taking no notice of his sneer.

"Tiens!" he exclaimed, "you don't mean to say that you haven't emerged from the epoch of patron saints yet?"

"We haven't," I replied, "and I hope it will be long before we do."

He gave a jeering laugh.

"Sainte Barbe," he repeated; "and what's her speciality?"

I turned round and looked him full in the face.

"Look you here," I said, "you've found a job where you'd little cause to expect one, but let me tell you we've no mind to harbour freethinkers. I've some experience of what a scoffer—as you seem to be—can say of such ways as we cling to here, and my conclusion is that a man keeps straighter by believing rather too much than too little."

He laughed again.

"I understand," he said; "I draw my twenty francs a week at the pleasure of Sainte Barbe, so I'd best be respectful to her."

He said no more, either then or later, on the subject; but that was quite enough to show that he was altogether of another way of thinking from most of us, for at Rochehaut we led simple, frugal, old-fashioned lives, and the new revolutionary notions that we heard talk of now and again in politics and religion sounded to us flimsy and worthless in comparison to the creed we had learnt from Monsieur le Curé in the parish church at the evening catechising.

However, let the Frenchman hold what opinions he would, he was brisk enough at his work, and I had a good report to give to Pascal when he asked me that evening how the new loader shaped.

As I started home afterwards, Christophe Delhogne, the hunchback, joined me at the foot of the steep path that leads through the woods to the village above. He, too, worked at the facing.

"Gilbert," he said, looking at me sharply from under his shaggy brows, "Gilbert, what about that Frenchman?"

"Well," I repeated, "what about him?"

"Nothing more than this," he replied—"that if I had been the patron I wouldn't have taken him on."

Now if Christophe had heard the Frenchman's sneers, I could have understood; but he had not heard.

"Perhaps you wouldn't," I said. "We all know you're far from being as soft-hearted as the patron; still, the man's worth his pay. I've watched him well to-day."

"So have I," he replied; "and I know you'll think it just one of my fads, but, Gilbert, I don't like the looks of him—no, I don't."

I was going to ask him why not, just to see how he had added the stranger up—for Christophe was very 'cute—when we heard quick steps behind us, and the man we were talking of joined us.

"Ah!" he said, looking at Christophe, "I was after you. You can lodge me, I hear."

"Can we?" said the hunchback brusquely. "Who said so?"

"The patron—Pascal said so. He said your mother has——"

"The patron talks a lot too fast," interrupted Christophe. "We don't take lodgers and we don't want to."

He dropped behind as he spoke. Raux looked after him and laughed.

"Perhaps the old woman will be easier to deal with."

"Very likely," I said; "still, if I were you I'd try elsewhere."

"I shall do no such thing," he retorted; "that fellow's got a twist in his temper as well as in his spine. I saw him look at me over his work to-day, as if he'd taken a spite against me. The patron says the old woman is a tidy sort of body, and if I like the look of her, I'll have the room just to serve that grumpy chap out."

I said no more; it wasn't my business, only I liked the stranger none the better.

Between the edge of the wood and the village is a belt of grass land, and as we climbed on up we saw Céline Pascal sitting there minding the cattle as they ate their evening meal on the hillside. She was leaning her head on her hand, her large, sad eyes were fixed on the distant hills behind which the sun was beginning to sink in a glow of crimson and gold. The path led us close past her; but she did not seem to see us.

"Bon soir, Céline," I said.

"Bon soir, Gilbert," she answered, without turning her head.

The stranger looked at her partly with curiosity, partly with admiration.

"Bon soir, mademoiselle," he began, "it is hot work climbing your hill when one is not used to it."

"I dare say it is," she replied gravely, scarcely looking at him.

"What a splendid evening," he began again; but this time she took no notice at all; perhaps she thought he was speaking to me. We walked on.

"I should think it would be uphill work to make love to that one," he said. "She doesn't look as if she'd give a man much encouragement."

"She wouldn't either," I said.

"And why not?" he asked; "is she a votary of Sainte Barbe?"

"That's neither your business nor mine," I answered sharply.

"I beg your pardon," was his reply; "a handsome girl like that is any man's business—as long as she is still to be had, and I don't think Mademoiselle Céline has a sweetheart to judge by her looks."

"You're a deal too sharp," I said.

"Well, has she?" he persisted.

"I have no more to say," I repeated once more, "except that it's no business of yours and mine."

I might have told him more had I chosen; but I didn't choose. His way of asking vexed me.

"And now about Mother Delhogne,"

he said, as we reached the village; "the patron said the first house on the right-hand side."

He stopped, looked round him, and then knocked at the door. I looked too. Christophe was not in sight. I knew he had stopped to talk with Céline.

That evening, before my wife and I had finished supper, the door opened suddenly and the hunchback came in.

"Gilbert," he cried angrily, "you heard what I said to that fellow coming up the hill?"

"Yes," I replied, "I heard and so did he, but I guess he didn't heed."

"He didn't. When I got home there he sat with his pipe in his mouth, and my mother stood at the door brimming over, as if it'd be good news to me; and when I tried to say my say she was quite put out, and said she wasn't likely to refuse a good offer, seeing how badly she was in need. In need, Gilbert, mark you that."

"Well, lad," I began soothingly, "she hasn't got used to doing without Jacques's earnings yet."

"That's all you know," he cried. "Why, for months before he went off for good, Jacques fooled all his money away, and since he's been gone I've taken care she should want for nothing. Even if we do have to stint now and then, I would prefer that to having that fellow's eyes watching me round the house, and seeing his sneering face opposite me all the evening."

"Come, come, Chris," I interrupted, "he won't stop in all evening, and, while he's there, why not make the best of it. After all, you've no grounds to be set against him."

"And more than that," he went on, taking no heed of what I said, "while we were having supper, the patron puts in his head to see the upshot of his recommendation, and my mother begins to thank him as if she had been starving and he had saved her. Then he comes right in, as proud as Punch of her gratitude and of himself, and sits down and starts off talking—you know his way, first about one thing and then about another—and asking if we'd any news of Jacques, and that brought him to the chapter of Céline, and then I got up and came away."

"There, there, lad," I said as he paused, "that's enough; now you listen to me. If the Frenchman is going to work at the quarry he'll soon know the story of Jacques, and all about Céline. So why not as well first as last? And why should you make

yourself a new worry by setting yourself against him in this way? I call it unreasonable."

I thought it wiser to say this, though in my heart I could understand Christophe's prejudice.

"Yes," chimed in my wife, "perhaps you'll end by liking him. And is there any news from Jacques?"

Christophe shook his head sadly.

"I'm beginning to think," he said, "that we never shall hear from him any more. It's six months since we heard last, and the last letter I wrote to the address he gave came back yesterday with 'Not known here' written on it."

"Have you told Céline that?" I asked.

He nodded, then with a fresh burst of indignation, "That was what Pascal started talking of. He thought I should join him in abusing my own flesh and blood."

"Christophe," I began hesitatingly, for I knew how sore he was on the subject, "you can hardly wonder that Pascal abuses Jacques. Any one can see how Céline is pining. The old chap may be a bit simple, but he's the girl's father, and Jacques didn't behave well to her."

"He had no business to talk it over before a stranger," retorted Christophe, and then he marched out of the house as brusquely as he had come in.

"I think it's a pity Céline Pascal hasn't pride enough to leave off wearing the willow for a man who threw her over," said my wife as the door closed. "I used to think she was a girl of spirit, but bless me, she's worse with her trouble than the silliest chit could be."

"Perhaps," I suggested, "if she were a silly chit she'd take being jilted less to heart."

"Don't talk rubbish," replied my wife, "the girl is not only sore because he's played her false. She actually told me the other day that she cares for him still. How can she care for him? Just tell me that."

"But, Marie," I argued, "Jacques was the sort a girl would care for—a right down capital fellow."

"He was once," she rejoined, "but he isn't now. Look at the way he carried on before he went off for good. The best thing she can do is to put him out of her head."

"And pick up with some one else," I added slyly.

"Why not?" she said; "she'll have a 'dot,' and more than one would go wooing

her if she'd give half a word of encouragement. And all she does is to pine after a vaurien that's forgotten her."

Céline was to have a wooer, however, who did not require the half word of encouragement my wife spoke of, whom no show of indifference could rebuff. I learnt this from Christophe a few weeks after the Frenchman had come to Rochehaut.

"Gilbert," he said to me one Sunday, as we strolled in the meadow by the river, "Gilbert, just guess what that Frenchman has the impudence to be doing?"

I looked at him in surprise.

"Have you seen anything that makes you think he's after Céline?" he went on.

I shook my head. "I see but little of him out of the quarry," I replied; "he isn't my sort."

"He isn't your sort, isn't he?" he cried angrily. "You were mighty sharp with me for saying that a while back. But whatever sort he is, he's trying to make love to Céline. He watches for her, and waits for her, and dodges after her here and there. He tries to put me off the scent, but I'm quicker than he thinks."

"And Céline," I asked, "what does she say? How does she like him?"

"How should you suppose she would like him? I should think she would hate him. Listen to his talk about things. Didn't you say just now he wasn't your sort?"

"I did, but that doesn't settle the question for the girl he chooses to make love to. He won't talk politics to her."

"I didn't say he would. But you just recollect that it's out of the fulness of his heart that a man speaks, whether he's talking politics in a public-house, or trying to entice a girl's heart away from—"

"Christophe," I interrupted, "I don't want to see Céline take up with the Frenchman—far from it; but she'd do better to give up thinking of Jacques. He gave her up without any just cause; he went away without bidding her good-bye, and now he's been gone two years, and after scarce hearing from him at all, you've lost trace of him altogether. Any man may woo her and do no harm."

"That's not Céline's way of thinking," rejoined Christophe obstinately; "she won't give up all belief in him. She helps me to hope a bit, too. She always reminds me what a good lad he was before he got led wrong, and she's sure he'll turn back to his old ways some day, and come back to her; and when he comes, she says, he shall

have the comfort of seeing that she hasn't lost faith in him."

"My lad," I said, "it seems to me worse than useless for you and her to buoy one another up with such a poor consolation as that."

It was not long before we saw how poor the consolation was, for news came at last of the truant, and with the news all hope vanished.

The news came, too, in a way that we had never thought of—one Saturday night, when a lot of us were sitting in Louvet's inn, while Eugène Louvet read aloud from a newspaper which some one had sent him from Lille. We were all very much interested, for there was a great strike in one of the French colliery districts. There had been riots which the soldiery had been called out to quell, and many outrages had taken place. In one case a colliery manager, who had dealt with his men in a summary manner, had been shot down at his own door, and though he was not killed, that was mere chance.

After some time the would-be murderer had been discovered, and the trial had begun. It was reported very fully, and the column had been marked by the sender of the paper. Eugène Louvet glanced at it, ran his eye down it, and then looked round at us all with a strange, horrified expression.

"Go on, Eugène," said two or three.

"I can't," said Eugène faintly, taking off his glasses and letting the paper drop on to the table.

"Then some one else must," said a voice.

It was the Frenchman who leant across and took the paper, and began to read. Considering how fluently he talked, I was surprised to hear how badly he read. He stumbled and bungled, and more than once he had to be told to speak up. Presently his voice got clearer, and the upshot of the terrible story became plain to us all. The accused had not been working very long at the place where the crime had been committed. He had been known there as Jean Dumont, but under cross-examination it came out that this was not his real name. His real name was Jacques Delhogne, and his native place was Rochehaut, in the province of Luxembourg. The Frenchman raised his eyes and looked round; there was a murmur, but no one spoke audibly. He went on, stumbling worse than ever—I guessed he was thinking of Céline. The accused confessed that

he was of the band who had plotted the murder, but he denied everything else—even that he knew who had fired the shot; but the evidence was overpowering. The trial was reported from first to last—for it was a weekly paper—and the sentence was "Penal servitude for life."

"Mon Dieu!" said the Frenchman, "penal servitude for life."

And we all sat silent.

"I can't believe it," said Eugène Louvet at last. "The lad turned wild, but he wasn't of the stuff that assassins are made of. Besides, he denies it."

"Of course he denies it," said the Frenchman irritably; "but look at the evidence. There was no standing against such evidence. The jury were bound to convict. If he hadn't done it he should have proved his innocence."

In an hour the news was all over the village, and Céline Pascal knew that she could look for her lover's return no more.

Poor Christophe was a changed man from that day. He lost his readiness to talk, and went about with a stern, resigned face that was pitiful to see. He never spoke of his trouble to me. I doubt if he did to any one, even to Céline.

As to the Frenchman, he took a fresh start in his courtship—in the face of all obstacles.

"He'll have her yet," old Pascal would say, in his confidential moments, "he's a man with a will of his own, I can see, and though he is not the one I would have chosen for her, yet I can't help wishing him luck. Anyhow, he's a better bargain than that fellow she hankers after still. I would have had her give him up when he threw her over, and now that he's killed a man, or as good, and gone to prison for life, she ought to see her mistake. Still, she gives the Frenchman no encouragement."

The fact was he wanted no encouragement, and little by little we came to think that his winning of Céline would only be an affair of time; and we were sorry for it.

The summer came round again; Raux had worked with us for a year, and again we had a great press of work at the quarry, and, as luck would have it, the weather was hotter than any one could ever recollect it to have been. All day long the sun beat down into the deep river-bend where the quarry lay. The heat quivered over the meadow and above the trees. The foliage hung heavily in the windless

air. It would have been hot work to sit still and do nothing. So you may think what it was to have to give up even our dinner hour. We were at the end of our patience as we toiled at the facing almost naked. I had a rough time as butty, the more so because I set my face against unlimited beer-drinking.

"Confound it," growled the Frenchman, when I had spoken to him three or four times; "drink what you please yourself, and let me alone. If you had to pay for my liquor you might stint it."

"You've had too much already," I said, for he spoke thickly, "and I interfere because you're doing your work badly in consequence. You've put a lot too much on that truck, more than your horses can pull, and you'll have to waste time now in taking it off."

"I shan't," he said in a surly tone. "I know what I'm about. I'm not going to make three loads where two will do."

"If you won't take some off," I said, "you'll strain your horses, and that I shan't allow."

"The horses aren't yours," he said.

I felt very angry with him.

"You'd better go outside," I said, "and duck your head in the river, and then come back and look at the thing in your sober senses. I tell you the load's too heavy."

For answer he banged the back of the truck into place, and took the scotch from behind the wheels. The weary horses gave a great tug, but without effect; the truck slid slowly backward.

"Put the scotch on again," I cried.

Instead of doing it, he sprang forward between the truck and the wall of the shaft and lashed his whip furiously across the head of the hindmost horse. The patient creature made another violent effort. There was a loud sound of metal snapping. The chain which served as a trace had given way on the side further from the Frenchman. I shouted to him, but it was too late. The overloaded waggon swerved from the rails and rushed backwards till it jammed by its own weight against the rock, before he had time to get out.

"Le Français," I called, horrified, and a moan of agony came back in answer.

It was some time before we could set him free. When we did, we saw that, though he was conscious, he was in a very bad way. His left side was horribly mangled, and from a wound in his head

the blood had flowed over his pale face. We carried him out to the atelier and began to plan for taking him up to the village.

"You needn't trouble," he said feebly. "It's all over with me, and I may as well die here."

We looked at one another. He had never been a churchgoer, but we couldn't let him die like a dog. It was old Pascal who bent over him and suggested sending for Monsieur le Curé. The Frenchman gave a curious start.

"Yes, yes," he said, "for the curé and the bourguemestre."

"Why the bourguemestre?" asked Pascal. "It isn't usual in such cases."

"For the bourguemestre," went on the other, speaking with difficulty. "I've something I must say—and Céline—she must come, too—and where's the hunch-back?"

We thought he was wandering, but Christophe came forward.

"You've never liked me," murmured the Frenchman, "have you?" Then he closed his eyes, and Christophe began to bathe his head with water from the river. "Have they sent for the bourguemestre?" he asked. "Why doesn't he come?"

Céline came before the bourguemestre did. She looked awed, and tears were on her face. He opened his eyes and looked at her with a sad, longing look.

"I'm sorry I spoke so hard to you," she said softly. "You'll forgive me, won't you?"

"Never mind that," he whispered; "the forgiving won't be on my side."

Then the bourguemestre arrived, wondering why he had been summoned, and lastly the curé, bearing the blessed Sacrament, and followed by an acolyte.

We all uncovered reverently, but the Frenchman shook his head impatiently.

"I only want to confess," he said. We were about to move off, when he spoke again. "Stop," he said, "my confession is not for the priest alone. And some one must write it down. It's not a bagatelle that I've got on my mind." He looked round with his old, hard expression, then

he summoned all his strength to speak, but his voice failed continually, and only Christophe, Céline, and the curé heard all distinctly. The bourguemestre wrote at the curé's dictation. "I tell this because I am dying," he began, "otherwise I should have kept the secret. It was not Delhogne who shot at Mr. Verrier. It was I. No one knew who it was, though. There were more than twenty of us. We drew lots who should kill him. We agreed not to tell, even among ourselves, who got the fatal lot. It fell to me. I said nothing; but I went and shot him. Then I managed to get off without rousing suspicion. I came here and hid. I don't know why they fixed the deed on him, but he was taken; and you know the rest. He called himself Dumont. I didn't know he belonged here till——"

He looked round again; Céline had drawn away from him, Christophe had left off bathing his head.

"If it's all written down I'll sign it," he said. "Mind you, if he had had the lot he would have done it. Perhaps he would have shot straighter than I did. But he'll be let off."

A great horror came over us. The bourguemestre brought the paper for him to sign. He tried to raise his head, but he fell back helplessly. Christophe put the pen between his fingers, and he scrawled a name which was not Louis Raux, and we all signed as witnesses. Then Monsieur le Curé gave us a sign, and we left him along with the dying man, who showed no signs of repentance. He lingered for an hour or two, but he spoke no more; yet the curé fancied he had softened before the end came.

A little later in the year, Jacques Delhogne, aged and gaunt from mental and bodily suffering, crept back to his native village. For many a long day, however, the terrible sin in which he had partaken hung like a cloud between us and him. Slowly and wearily he worked his way back into our esteem. But Céline, who had believed in him the longest, was the last to forgive him.

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MISS LATIMER OF BRYANS.

By ELEANOR C. PRICE.

Author of "Alexia," "Red Towers," "The Little One," etc.

CHAPTER XXIII. SHADOWS.

IT was really almost dark ten minutes later, when Poppy and Arthur drove down the lonely road and turned up to the avenue. For some distance they had seen no one. Geoffrey Thorne had come across them last, riding by a woodland bridle-path which crossed their road. After a word or two he disappeared among the low trees, and they drove slowly on, for Bobby was tired, between broad grass margins, and long, ugly hedges with a gaunt tree here and there, bounding wide grey fields that stretched away into the dimness, and dark masses of silent wood beyond them. It was a little foggy, and objects were becoming uncertain. A glimmering distant light here and there marked the place of a farm or a lonely cottage. It was one of those evenings which to imaginative natures always seem a little creepy, and make thoughtful people nervous and sad. An evening when unholy things may stalk abroad, and murder and treason seem possibilities, and the sight of some sheeted spectre by the ditch would not be surprising.

Arthur Nugent felt something of this, Poppy nothing. With him close beside her, with Bobby trotting in front of her, she was as happy, safe, and cheerful as in the sunshine of the morning. Her content made Arthur careful not to betray any inward shiverings or involuntary longings for the end of this rather dismal drive. His strength was nothing to boast of, and

he really felt tired. He was half inclined to go to sleep in the cart, till the sight of Geoffrey Thorne made it possible to speak to Poppy on a subject which had for him a growing and tormenting interest; he hardly yet confessed to himself of what kind or what extent.

"Have I been dreaming," he began, "or did somebody tell me Mr. Thorne was going to marry that friend of yours—that pretty girl?"

Poppy hesitated a moment.

"I think you were dreaming, or at least you must have heard more than anybody said. Who told you?"

"Upon my word, I can't say. Could it have been your aunt?"

"I don't know. Perhaps so; but she can only have said it was an idea. She and I thought it would be a good thing, and I found the other day that old Mr. Farrant has it in his head, too. But I know no more, and of course all that is nothing."

"I don't know; when things are in the air they very often come to something. I have often noticed that. Well, Thorne would be a lucky fellow."

"Do you really think so, Arthur?"

"Of course I do. Miss Farrant is not merely pretty; it is real beauty, you know, of a certain sort. Besides, I dare say that old grandfather is as rich as a Jew. The poor girl must have a miserable life with him. What is Thorne delaying about, I wonder?"

Two things in this speech gave Poppy food for surprised thought. First, Arthur's making no doubt that the marriage was desirable for Geoffrey Thorne. Second, his suggesting that Maggie's life was miserable. Her first instinct was to tell him that he was mistaken on both points,

that he knew nothing of Geoffrey's great merit, and that Maggie was a spoilt child. But the new habit of faith in Arthur rose and rebelled. To be sure, he had seen Geoffrey, and knew all she thought of him. A man's measure of another man was likely to be accurate, and after all, he was paying a compliment to Maggie. It was more interesting to know what gave him the impression of Maggie's misery.

"You always see things right, dear," she said. "But tell me what makes you think that Maggie's life is miserable? I have never thought so."

"It may not always have been miserable; but it is now. Is it possible that you don't see the change? Either her grandfather bullies her beyond endurance, or else she is worrying her own life out about something. She looks to me a different girl from the girl I first met—I told you—when I asked her the way. She was a splendid young animal then, all spirit and life—looked as happy as a princess. I couldn't imagine who she was—but I told you. Now she won't even look one in the face, and the way she watches you would break your heart, if you noticed it."

He paused. The subject was more dangerous than he had himself known. The reference to that meeting in the wood had an electric power which thrilled him strangely. His heart beat fast, and it was all he could do to keep the sudden agitation from showing itself in his voice. But this remained as gentle, almost indifferent as before. Surely, in these unwholesome November mists, along this stretch of muddy, ugly road, treason, if nothing worse, was abroad that evening.

Poppy was not quite unaffected by the evil atmosphere. With all her faith, with all her honesty and want of imagination, she felt a vague discomfort. Arthur's next words—he was obliged to go on talking, if only to set up defences against himself—directed her thoughts into a channel where he was not unwilling to leave them, though the direction itself, on his part, was reckless and almost unintentional.

"I'm afraid I am the obstacle, do you know. Absurd, but I can't help feeling for the poor girl. Do you think so? Do you think it is possible that the loss of you depresses her in this way?"

"But—she has not lost me."

"Practically, I think she has. At least, I suspect that is her idea, and I dare say she—well, very likely her disposition is not exactly resigned or patient——"

"It is ridiculous," said Poppy, with a touch of haughtiness in her tone.

"Yes, dear. But considering all you have done for her—well, the truth is, people like you and me naturally think they have a right to be selfish."

"Are we selfish? You are not, at any rate. Arthur, how wonderful you are!"

For a minute or two Bobby had his own way, and began to walk.

"Arthur, you see everything, and I am the blindest creature in the world. Poor Maggie! I dare say you are quite right, for she is really very young and childish. She is lonely, of course, poor child—though you must not think the old man is unkind to her. So you think I have been unkind. But what can I do? Yes, darling, I will be good; I can afford it. Only I can't have her quite always while you are here."

"My dearest, I may be utterly mistaken. How can I tell? Perhaps we have left her out in the cold a little, and when a person's position is at all peculiar——"

"Yes, of course. Here we are at the turn. How dark it is getting. Oh, Bobby, don't go into the ditch!"

The woman at the lodge knew the sound of Bobby's feet and the light wheels, and ran out to open the gates for them.

"Have you seen Mr. Cantillon pass, Mrs. Porter?" said Poppy. "I am afraid we are late."

"Yes," the woman said. Mr. Cantillon had passed a quarter of an hour ago. And two or three minutes ago a lady had passed. As well as she could see in the dark, she thought it was Miss Farrant.

They drove quickly on down the hill, at first without speaking. It was almost too dark to see anybody, but Arthur's eyes soon caught a woman's figure walking slowly down the left-hand side of the avenue. Here and there, as she passed out of the deeper darkness of the trees, she was just visible, like a shadow crossing lighter spaces.

"There she is," he murmured to Poppy. "Shall we take her home to tea?"

"Yes, dear."

Maggie was now again hidden under one of the great beeches. She had almost given them up; the darkness and loneliness frightened her a little, as well as the thought of her grandfather; and she had unwillingly started down the avenue, her shortest way home from this point. If they had been a little later still she would have missed them altogether, for she would have crossed the bridge and turned into

the path where Arthur had first seen her. The path now would be as black as night, but Maggie knew every tree of it as well as those in her own garden. She heard the soft rippling and rushing of the stream under the bridge; then, almost as soft on the damp and even gravel, came Bobby's little swift feet, and the cart lightly running. She stopped as they passed, mere shadows in the dim dusk. She hardly even knew that they had stopped, till something tall blocked up the little light there was. Then she was aware of the lifting of a hat, and felt that Arthur Nugent was holding her hand.

He was saying something, but Poppy's familiar voice from the cart was more audible.

"Maggie, is that you? What are you doing in the dark, my dear? Now you are coming home with us to tea."

Maggie went forward to the cart in something of a dream, Arthur following her. In some strange way it seemed as if he had held her hand for many minutes—it was not two seconds, really. But these things were not realised until later. Now it was with a kind of weary surprise that she heard again the old tone in Poppy's voice, the old sweet frankness and affection.

"Oh, thank you," she began, "but I am too late already. I must go straight home. Besides—I really can't to-day."

"But you really must," said Poppy, in convincing tones. "Why are you so disobedient? We will send to tell your grandfather. Come, get in."

"How could you see me in the dark?" said the girl doubtfully.

She meant to speak to Arthur, but he said nothing.

"We have very good eyes," Poppy answered. "Now—Bobby is impatient."

"But you—no, I'll walk," Maggie explained, this time turning to Arthur in earnest.

"You will walk, Arthur," said their liege lady.

Maggie hardly knew how she got into the cart; but there she was. Bobby had to curb his impatience, and they went at a foot's pace over the bridge and up the hill to the Court. Captain Nugent walked on Poppy's right hand. They hardly spoke, for the darkness was oppressive, and perhaps none of the three was absolutely happy. Only Maggie whispered to her friend, when Arthur was not quite close by:

"Poppy, I'm not fit to be seen. I've got

all my old things on. I was only watching just for a sight of you."

They lingered together for a moment in the soft yet dazzling light of the hall before going on into the drawing-room. Arthur looked across at the two as he pulled off his coat in a distant corner.

"Now, Poppy, look at me," the girl murmured to her friend. "I'm really not fit to be seen, you know."

It seemed a new thing for Maggie to be shy; this affliction had only come upon her in the last month. Poppy looked at her with an indulgent smile. There was certainly something careless and disordered about her appearance, generally so finished in its prettiness. Her dark curly hair was almost rough; her eyes were unnaturally bright; her mouth was strained and unhappy; and the pale, soft cheeks, which did not often change colour, were stained with a dark flush. Her eyes seemed wistfully to entreat for something. She looked a little wild, certainly, and hardly arranged for a civilised visit. As Poppy looked at her the smile faded, and something of Maggie's undoubted trouble seemed to communicate itself. She wondered—and not she only—whether the girl had any idea at all of her own loveliness. She also felt a pang of self-reproach. This, however, did not find its way into words. Only she laid her hand on Maggie's shoulder, stooped a little—for she was a good deal taller—and kissed her with the gentlest kindness.

"You are all right, dear," she said. "Come in."

A lively and earnest talk was going on in the drawing-room, round the tea-table and the fire, where Miss Fanny Latimer, Mrs. Nugent, and Mr. Cantillon were sitting together. The truth was that Mr. Cantillon had found it impossible to keep his thoughts to himself till he saw Fanny alone. He did not see that Mrs. Nugent could do any harm; besides which her manner to him was particularly pleasant, and the sight of Poppy's evident happiness suggested that her scheming was not, after all, unpardonable. And she was almost one of the family; Poppy's future mother-in-law, Fanny's dearest friend. The Rector therefore allowed himself to be eloquent, in a quiet way, on the subject of poor Maggie Farrant and her unhappiness. He was sure that if Poppy could guess the pain caused by her apparent neglect—in fact a hint to Poppy would put everything right at once.

"Dear Poppy—so generous! And after all, so natural," murmured Mrs. Nugent, smiling. "Poor girl, one quite understands."

Miss Fanny Latimer was the hardest-hearted of the three. She was not at all inclined to speak to Poppy on the subject. She considered Maggie absurdly spoiled; she thought it was quite time for her to find out her real position. She did not at all see why the girl should be a burden on Poppy's hands for ever. As for selfishness or real forgetfulness, Poppy was incapable of either. She looked at the Rector as severely as if her niece had been openly accused of these things, so that he was quite distressed, and turned his eyes pensively to the fire.

"Well, you know my opinion," Fanny concluded. "I made the nicest possible plan, but nobody will take the trouble to help it along, so I suppose it will come to nothing. Of course the girl will go on all her life expecting all sorts of things from Poppy. Most unreasonable. Now, if she could marry as we all wish—except you, Henry, I believe—everybody would be satisfied. You think the man is too good for her. Does that matter so very much? And after all, he is not a paragon. And he will marry somebody some day; and this girl has money and good looks. He ought to think himself lucky. Don't you agree with me, Laura?"

"I do," said Mrs. Nugent. "To me it seems a charming arrangement. The girl is pretty enough to marry anybody, and the sooner she is disposed of the better. Poppy cannot, of course, keep up the same interest for ever. Besides," she went on with a slight laugh, "a girl so pretty as that, and in rather a false position, might be a real danger in the village. Some of Arthur's susceptible friends might easily be entangled—young Scott, Fanny, for instance, or Captain Lawson, who is not very wise, poor fellow. It is almost the same risk as having a desperately pretty housemaid, only worse."

"You are quite right, Laura. Something must be done," said Miss Latimer.

She looked across at Mr. Cantillon, who still gazed sadly into the fire, and irritation shone in her blue eyes.

"Geoffrey Thorne has paid the girl great attention, I know," she said. "A hint to him would be of much more use than a hint to Poppy."

There was a little silence.

"If that foolish girl is still waiting at

the gate, she will be quite benighted," said the Rector uneasily. "Surely they ought to have been in long ago."

Miss Latimer turned her head, hearing a faint sound in the hall.

"Perhaps they have taken her home. Poppy is capable of any nonsense. Ah, here they are," as the door opened slowly. "My dear Poppy, have you—"

She stopped short, for Poppy came into the room smiling, still a little dazzled from the outside darkness, with her hand in Maggie Farrant's arm.

Miss Latimer was equal to the occasion; her bright face beamed with welcome. With all her schemes and impatience, she was one of the kindest-hearted of women. As for the Rector, he got up from his chair with a sensation of real pleasure. He had never admired Porphyria more than at that moment; and Fanny's sudden sweetness filled his heart with a new warmth of affection for her. As for Mrs. Nugent, she looked amused, and with the slightest possible shrug of her shoulders gave one cold glance at Maggie's glowing face. Then her eyes rested on Arthur, who was following the two girls into the room. He had never looked better or handsomer, she thought. The perfect understanding between him and Poppy was evident. These long days in the chilly November air, for which she often felt inclined to blame Poppy as a thoughtless, inconsiderate young woman, were taking their part, it was plain, in making a strong man of Arthur.

There followed half an hour of pleasant, lively talk in the old drawing-room, and even the Rector could not deny that Arthur was a peculiarly amiable man with charming manners. Everybody judged him a little, that evening—it could not be helped—by his behaviour to Poppy's protégée, over whom some change had certainly come, for all her old self-confidence had left her; she did not talk much, and looked neither easy nor happy. It was in no one but herself, this change. Poppy was, if possible, a little kinder than in old days. Miss Latimer was always the same to the Bryans people; good-natured, polite, a little preoccupied. Mr. Cantillon was quiet, courteous, and gentle. Mrs. Nugent was a mere spectator; she said nothing to Maggie, but looked at her often more or less furtively, and perhaps "thought the more." Arthur was attentive and pleasant, exactly as he would have been to any lady, Poppy's friend, but

keeping his talk strictly general, describing the day's run with Poppy's help as to localities, declaring that he should begin to hunt in another week. Not once did Maggie meet one of those looks which had been hers already, and the like of which Poppy had never seen. Still, she was uneasy; and she was half glad when Mr. Cantillon got up and said:

"Now I must go; and you will let me take you home, Miss Farrant?"

No one remonstrated much. Mr. Cantillon laughed at the idea of a lantern, and in fact, when they were outside on the terrace, they found it not nearly so dark as before. The moon had risen, and a dim, misty whiteness, uncertain, confusing, seemed to bathe the earth in a new kind of atmosphere.

"Well," said the Rector kindly, "you are happier now."

"She is an angel," Maggie said.

In another moment she exclaimed:

"Oh, who is it?" and caught at the Rector's arm.

"Don't be frightened," said the voice of Arthur Nugent, coming up behind them. "And don't be angry, Mr. Cantillon. I have had leave to see you home, because Miss Latimer is anxious about a certain foot-bridge in the meadow. She says that going by Church Corner will take you home that way, and she says—she may be wrong—that my eyes are better than yours."

"Are you speaking of Porphyria?" asked the Rector, with a touch of sharpness.

"No, no, of Miss Latimer," said the young man, in his most good-humoured voice. "You don't mind, do you?"

"It is quite unnecessary, thank you. My eyes are not good, certainly; but I know that bridge as well as the passage in my own house."

"And I could go with Mr. Cantillon," said Maggie softly.

"And come back alone? Oh, no!" murmured the young man, so that she said no more.

"You are very kind, but you will catch cold, and it is perfectly unnecessary," said the Rector, standing still.

"I can't disobey my orders," pleaded Arthur. "I had them from Poppy too."

On which the Rector laughed impatiently and began walking very fast, suddenly outstripping his two companions. He was seized with the resolve that his present position with Fanny should last no longer. If she thus claimed the right to take care

of him, a perfect understanding between them could certainly be no longer delayed.

Arthur and Maggie walked silently after him, nearly to the turn into the path through the wood. Arthur felt sure that there he would wait for them. Before they quite reached it, he bent down to Maggie in the pale light and whispered:

"Will you do me a great kindness?"

She made no answer. Something seemed to rise in her throat; it was impossible to speak.

"Will you?" he whispered again; and this time the girl bent her head.

"I want to speak to you. Don't go into your house, wait for me outside—give me a sign where. I need not go beyond the bridge."

It sounded like madness. Maggie trembled from head to foot at the daring request, but she said nothing.

They passed into the darkness of the wood, and here the Rector begged her to go first, as she knew the path so well. Arthur was last of the little group, and Mr. Cantillon suddenly began to tell him a story of how he had once been himself lost in this very wood, had not known which way to turn, and had wandered about for an hour, confused among the beech-trunks, till suddenly a light came along, and it was this young lady with her lantern.

"The danger and the beauty of the wood are both hers," Arthur muttered below his breath.

"What did you say?" said Mr. Cantillon.

But they had reached the lane, and Maggie, turning round, gave her hand to each of them with a hasty good-night. Arthur followed her with his eyes, lingering a moment in the grassy road. In the glimmering moonshine she seemed to vanish round a corner of wall to the right.

"Miss Farrant is quite safe; that is the way into her garden," said Mr. Cantillon. "This is our way, if you really insist on coming further."

THE BURGLARY SEASON.

As winter approaches, with its long, dark nights and short intervals of feeble daylight, the burglar or housebreaker begins to take his walks abroad, and to mark out in advance objects which he judges suitable for his enterprises. The words burglar or housebreaker are often used indiscriminately as meaning pretty much the same kind of

customer; but in law there is a subtle distinction between the two. The burglar, to retain his position, must do his burgling between nine in the evening and six in the morning, otherwise his exploits amount only to robbery. This limitation is of less importance as it is between those hours that the burglar would choose to be at work, and his favourite hour is, perhaps, between two and three o'clock a.m., when darkness is most profound and sleep weighs most heavily on the eyelids of ordinary folk.

The burglar's title is not derived from any early slang or thieves' Latin, but is a survival from Anglo-Saxon jurisprudence, in which burg-breaking, or breaking into a castle or fortified enclosure, and presumably carrying off stockaded cattle, was recognised as a distinct offence, superior to that of raiding cattle from the open fields. In either case, however, the punishment of the thief was the same—namely, death. As early as the tenth century the citizens of London had formed themselves into a guild for the purpose of hunting down thieves, and in connection therewith was a kind of mutual insurance fund, which spread the individual loss from theft over the whole community.

But whatever his origin, the burglar, with his kindred of every degree, is a very unpleasant fact in our social condition, and there is reason to fear that the ranks of this class of criminals are increasing in numbers, and are recruited by a class better educated and of greater mechanical skill than the cracksmen of old, and more reckless of human life in resisting capture. The artisan who has lost character and employment brings to the business a knowledge of the construction of dwelling-houses and their internal arrangements, with nimbleness and dexterity in movement. The valet or butler, disgraced and out of place, has a valuable store of knowledge concerning the habits and hours of his former employers, and of the places where the most valuable things are kept. The clerk who has robbed his master has at least a general knowledge of the contents and position of safes, and probably retains an appearance which disarms suspicion as he reconnoitres banks or counting-houses. Not all at once does a man become a burglar or thief, but when he has once served a term in prison, there is in many cases no resource left for him except in that direction, and despite all the vigilance of warders and stringency of rule he has probably formed acquaintances

in prison who will show him how to launch himself upon a career of crime.

In some such way are formed the gangs which attempt the chief enterprises of burglary, the robberies of safes and strong-rooms, and of jewellers' shops or other stores of treasure. These require careful preparation, and involve the possession of many tools and implements. Wedges of the finest tempered steel, some with edges as fine as razor blades, and ranging to half an inch or more; these are required for breaking open safes, by prising the doors from their hinges. Or there are drills which must be capable of biting into the case-hardened steel of the thief-proof safe. Then there is the jack-screw to work upon the purchase ingeniously effected in connection with the drill, which tears the side of the safe away in layers. Or the Councillor may be used—a jemmy or crowbar of polished steel, with sections to screw on and increase the power of leverage; while the still more formidable Alderman, of the same species, completes the work of destruction.

Such robberies are the work of considerable gangs, who must be able to wait and watch for an opportunity. The crib to be cracked—to use a term now old-fashioned in the profession—must be “readied” by assiduous scouting and watching. The attempt must be carefully timed to secure the largest amount of booty, and as its execution is a work of time and considerable labour, it is only such places as are locked up and left for the night, and especially between Saturday and Monday, that offer much chance of success to the burglar of safes and strong-rooms. Under this head our cracksmen are far surpassed by those of America, where bank robberies of a desperate character are far from uncommon. But as crime itself is now assuming an international form, and as some of the most enormous frauds attempted on English banks have been planned and elaborated on the other side of the Atlantic, it would not do for our bankers to rely upon their immunity from subtle and scientific attacks, or to deem their vaults and strong-rooms impregnable against the skill and resources of criminal organisations of the modern or trans-Atlantic pattern. It is due, however, to brother Jonathan to say that a large proportion of his most dangerous rogues are of European origin.

But in the middle classes, so to speak, of burglary and kindred crafts, England

may claim an unenviable supremacy. It is not long since a Chief Commissioner of Metropolitan Police addressed a solemn warning to the public at large—or at all events to that section of it possessed of well-filled jewel-cases and costly trinkets—to beware of the designs of an artful set, generally known as ladder thieves, who visit country houses between seven and half-past nine in the evening, when the inmates are at dinner and the servants busy, and by means of a ladder previously concealed in a handy position, reach the upper rooms and make a sweep of all the coin and jewellery left about. Suburban dwellings standing apart in their own grounds are peculiarly liable to this kind of attack on summer evenings, when the windows are left open and a gardener's ladder is probably within reach. America has the same class of operator, called "second-storey men," who take advantage of similar social habits in the States.

A different class of summer plunderers are those who make a special study of furnished houses locked up and uninhabited, as when the occupiers are enjoying their yearly holiday. Such houses are easily recognised by the observant eye. Circulars and scraps of paper accumulate about the forecourt, and the whole place shows incipient signs of neglect. It is easy then to knock and ring till the rogue has assured himself that there is no one on the premises. Then a window at the back perhaps is forced; the thief enters, and the whole contents of the house are at his mercy. This is not a cracksman's business; he would not know what to do with a houseful of furniture. It is a business in which the more disreputable hangers-on of the least reputable sale rooms are sometimes found engaged, and to such a one nothing is more easy than to bring a van to the door, and quietly remove the most valuable part of the household furniture, and then to dispose of it as if it had been seized for rent or under a bill of sale. If the neighbours have observed the process, it would hardly occur to them to suspect that a hardy piece of robbery was going on under their eyes. Although the danger of leaving a house unguarded is obvious enough, it is difficult to suggest a remedy. It is a useful precaution to leave the key of your house at the district police station. But your house may be stripped all the same.

Different classes of the community are

preyed upon by different castes of thieves. Not that there is any hard and fast line in the matter, for the skilful thief will sometimes play many parts. Yet there are men who specially devote themselves to the cash-boxes of publicans, and others who attack the safes of pawnbrokers. Such thefts are often the cause of great loss and embarrassment to their unlucky victims. But for a real terrorising and alarming ruffian commend us to the burglar who attacks a house by night, and crawls stealthily among its sleeping inmates. The sound of a stealthy footstep on the creaking stairs to one awake in the dead of night makes the blood run cold, while the dread of something indefinite in the way of evil, such as weighs upon the mind in the thrall of evil dreams or under the nightmare spell, seems to paralyse the will and deprive the limbs of their forces. Or it is the dull, deadened sound of door or window being forced open that arouses the sleeper to a sense of peril, as the night wind for a moment sighs through stairs and corridors. All is silence for a while, and the watcher begins to think that after all the noise was caused by a sudden gust of wind. Then in the profound stillness is heard the hurried breathing of some intruder.

The best informed on such matters say that you cannot keep the burglar out if he is determined to enter, and that the precautions you take in the way of shutters, electric bells, and other devices, only excite the burglar's cupidity, by giving him the notion that there is something very valuable thus defended. But having made his entry at the weakest point of the guarded enclosure, the thief knows that he has no time to waste; yet instead of at once making for the inhabited rooms, he will probably satisfy himself that the gas is turned off at the meter, lest a sudden unwelcome glare from some gas-jet should reveal his presence. The principal bed-chambers are his first quarry, and he sweeps the contents of dressing-tables into his pockets, empties the pockets of clothes in the wardrobe, searches drawers, dressing-cases, and jewel-cases. He is especially careful to obviate the danger of fire by dropping all the matchboxes he finds into the water-jug. He is not afraid of any one who is in bed in the dark and without means of striking a light, and knows the value of these little precautions, which a tyro in his nervousness might omit, but which may make all the difference between

a rich and successful haul and seven years' penal servitude. His great desire is to perform his task without disturbing anybody; but if he be a practitioner of the modern type he will carry a revolver, and be prepared to use it against anybody who may try to intercept him. Perhaps he may have an assistant who secures what there is of value about dining and drawing-room, and who makes a clearance in the butler's pantry; but the most successful and resolute of the fraternity work alone and for their own hands.

Such a practitioner was Charles Peace, the famous burglar, who was executed in 1889 for a murder committed rather in the pursuit of an unlawful passion than in the regular course of his calling. But he used his revolver freely to avoid capture, and yet such was his skill in disguise, and his general ingenuity and resource, that it was almost by accident that he was brought to the gallows. Peace became slightly famous as the musical burglar, having a hobby for the collection of musical instruments, and he lived in very good style on the proceeds of his robberies. There has been no one like him since the days of Jack Sheppard, and like Jack he almost succeeded in making a sensational escape. In the journey to Sheffield, where he was to be tried for the capital offence, although handcuffed and surrounded by warders, he succeeded in launching himself through the window of the railway-carriage as the train was running at express speed. A warder caught him by the boot as he was disappearing in his airy flight and so checked his momentum that he fell head foremost on the line, and was afterwards picked up insensible.

Such men—agile, adroit, and ferocious—are, it is to be hoped, not often to be found among the burgling fraternity. But there were some smart practitioners among the City Road gang, broken up only last year, who had committed nearly a hundred burglaries, and accumulated so much valuable property as to lead at last to their discovery. This gang had a public-house at its own disposal, and was in every way adapted for a long and successful career.

Unfortunately it does not appear that the spread of education has any effect in checking the increase of this description of crime. Nor has the severity of the sentences inflicted by the judges done any more towards it. For the

terrors of penal servitude only incite the burglar to make a more desperate resistance to arrest, and to add the crime of murder to that of robbery if in danger of capture. The old-fashioned practitioner, although in appearance more rough and savage, was generally ready to climb down when he was fairly caught; but the more polished cracksmen of the day, with his neat clothing, his moustache, with his watch in his pocket, is really a good deal more ferocious in essence than the man with the bludgeon and bulldog. And this consideration raises the question as to how we ought to behave when convinced of the presence on our premises of the midnight marauder. Are we for a duel "à outrance" with all the advantages on the side of the robber, or to remain in a pretended sleep while he rummages the house? Probably wisdom lies between the two extremes. An alarm is what he most dreads, and the sound of a police whistle through an open window will put him to flight, and it is questionable whether it be worth while to intercept his retreat.

But the most effective precaution we can take against the professional burglar is to take care to leave no valuables about to reward his efforts. People who are rich enough to possess gold or silver plate and jewels and trinkets of price can surely buy safes to secure their possessions, and to keep money in the house beyond the requirements of the moment is in effect to offer a temptation to robbery. Yet, although the professional burglar usually assures himself that there is good booty to be had before he makes his coup, people of moderate pretensions in the way of housekeeping need not hug themselves with the notion that they have nothing to fear. Inferior burglars wait upon the smaller mansions, people perhaps hardly worthy of the title, who work with humbler tools and upon a smaller scale. A sharpened bit of iron to act as a jemmy and the half of a pair of scissors to force back the catch of a window are, perhaps, the humble outfit of the beginner. Or he will lurk about outhouses, or hide in empty rooms, or crawl unobserved through a half-opened window. For such nothing comes amiss that can be packed into a bundle—sheets, blankets, wearing apparel, which he may pawn for a few shillings, but which it will cost many pounds to replace, are eagerly appropriated by the thief, who does not disdain electro-plate,

and will even "sneak" your garden tools. Those who live in flats are open to the attacks of thieves who make a special study of their ways and habits.

The modern burglar, indeed, is quite convinced that in order to live he must keep abreast of the times. He reads the "Morning Post," and keeps himself au courant with the movements of fashionable life. He keeps an eye on the disposal of wedding presents, and waits upon fashionable assemblies, and perhaps assists at the calling of carriages, hoping at some happy moment to seize some rich bracelet or brilliant necklace. And you may imagine the feelings of the skilful thief as he walks at night through the silent streets of the City with the enormous wealth that lies on every side of him—the jewellers' shops, where the lights are burning, and where all the neat arrangements behind the iron grille seem to offer a challenge to the burglar: come and take me. It is greatly to the credit of the City Police, to whose care all this wealth is committed every night and during the inviting period to the burglar—from Saturday afternoon till Monday morning—that so few successful raids have been made upon the treasures in their charge.

With the chance of serious loss, against which it is impossible to secure absolute safety, prudent people might like to indemnify themselves by insurance. Often enough must the jeweller, the diamond merchant, the bullion dealer, experience an evil quarter of an hour as his imagination conjures up what plots may be hatching against his substance. Insurance against these risks is as perfectly legitimate as against any other casualties. Underwriters have long been in the way of undertaking such risks for large amounts and under special circumstances; and there is at least one Company with offices in the City which undertakes to insure against loss from any kind of robbery, except such as might be effected by a man's own household, his business staff, or other inmates. Or again, with the exception of loss by loot, sack, or pillage by insurgents, etc., a clause that gives us a slight shiver of apprehension at the possibilities of such contingencies. It was Blucher, surely, who was credited with the saying, as he passed through the City with the allied Sovereigns to dine with the Lord Mayor: "And what a splendid city to sack!" And who can say in how many fold its riches have since increased?

But the householder, especially if he is in the habit of leaving his house untenanted during the holiday season, would find his account in insuring against burglary, as he already does against fire. Conceive how placidly he might treat the suggestion, perhaps, of an over-anxious spouse: "There are burglars in the house!" "Never mind, I am insured."

JASMIN : THE BARBER, POET, AND EMINENT PHILANTHROPIST.

IN TWO PARTS PART I.

To be skilful in the arts of poetry and shaving, and to carry into constant practice the virtue of philanthropy, is clearly to achieve a combination of rare talents, so incongruously mingled as to constitute true genius.

Poets, as a rule, have not been famous for their shaving. Indeed, they seem by nature far more prone to the neglect of their own beards than to the care of other people's. Nor, excepting in the case of the name which heads this notice, have we any record of a barber turning poet, and becoming in due time a very practical philanthropist. To court the Muse at leisure is a vastly common practice, and to cut the hair for profit is a very useful trade. But to combine these diverse pastimes with commensurate success—while giving away freely what the Muse had helped to earn—this surely is a union as commendable as it is unique.

Of Jasmin, the Gascon barber, and the poems which he wrote, we had some little knowledge before we had the pleasure to read his life by Dr. Smiles,* and were by no means loth to learn more.

The town of Agen, Jasmin's birthplace, stands on the muddy river Garonne, in the plains of Languedoc, some eighty miles above Bordeaux. The British tourist seldom visits it, for there is little to attract him, and the pointed paving-stones are terrible to tread. He might, however, get a glimpse of the snow-capped Pyrenees, which would be plainly visible from its sun-baked streets, if there were no houses to intercept the view; and the vines, and peach and pear-trees, which are plentiful and fruitful around the dusty town, might prove tempting to a parched and thirsty traveller from the North.

* "Jasmin : Barber, Poet, and Philanthropist." By Samuel Smiles, LL.D. London : John Murray.

Heroes lived in Greece before the birth of Agamemnon, and famous men were born in Agen ere Jasmin saw the light. Savants such as Bory de Saint-Vincent, the distinguished naturalist, and scholars such as Joseph Scaliger, the eminent philologist, might alike have claimed the honour of being cast in bronze, and of standing with their townsman to be gazed at by Gaze trippers and inspected by Cook's tourists. But Jasmin is left proudly alone with his glory, with no rival human statue to disturb his peace.

Like that of many famous men, the babyhood of Jasmin received but little notice, and the boyhood of the poet passed without a record by contemporary pens. Indeed, to no one but himself are we indebted for some knowledge of his early years. His Muse aiding his memory, he wrote some verses called "*Mous Soubenis*"—or, in plain French, "*Mes Souvenirs*"—which turned the prose of his poor childhood into a poetic form. From these rhythmical remembrances we glean some scattered facts and fancies about his birth and boyhood, which enable us to make a mental picture of his home.

He tells us that he was born on the morning of Shrove Tuesday, the tenth of March, '98, when day was doffing its black nightcap, and the sun began to shine. When kings or princes "give themselves the trouble to be born," to use the phrase of Figaro, another famous barber, it is common for the cannon's roar to celebrate the fact. But "not even a popgun," says Jasmin, "hailed my birth," although it certainly took place amid no little noise. While the mother was presenting the world with a new poet, the father was conducting a Gascon charivari, an orchestral outdoor concert, wherein marrow-bones and cleavers, and warming-pans and pokers, were the instruments in vogue. Such nuptial serenades were usual then in Agen, when weddings uncongenial and unpopular occurred. When old Monsieur Décembre was betrothed to frisky Ma'am-selle Mai, or when the wizened, rich Veuve Bossue espoused the young and gay Adonis Sans-Sou, their friendly neighbours would assemble, and escort them to the church with a clamour which attested disapproval of the match. To the music of the marrow-bones was sung a "chorus hymenæal, or triumphal chant," a thing which, unlike that which Shelley's skylark far outvalled, had certainly no "hidden want" of voluble abuse. At night the

wedding march was turned into a nuptial serenade; and, in very flagrant cases, the happy pair were actually besieged in their new home, and received some wedding presents, such as rotten eggs and cabbage-stalks, if they dared to show a face. Nor did the serenading always cease with the first night. Indeed, the sweets of the whole honeymoon were often much embittered by frequent fresh outbreaking of the popular contempt.

Although by trade a tailor, Jasmin's father was a sort of poet by repute. He had never learned to write, but the Muse was at his elbow while he sat and stitched. Poor and hump-backed as he was, his tongue was somewhat powerful, and he had won renown for his doggerel nuptial rhymes. Believers in heredity may trace this strain of poesy as descending to the son, whose rich genius, however, far surpassed his father's poor poetic art. It scarce seems probable that Jasmin could have been maternally indebted for his Muse. His mother was a slave to such dull prose of household drudgery as making both ends meet.

Despite his industry in tailoring, and his renown for rhyme-tagging, the family of Jasmin Père were miserably poor. Indeed, on one sad winter's day, the crippled wife was forced to sell her wedding-ring to buy her children food. Grandpère Boë, an old soldier, who in his decrepitude was quartered with the family, was wont to go a-begging daily for their sustenance; and when he at last was carried to the poor-house, it seemed as if starvation must soon stare them in the face. Master Jacques, the future poet, who had been the old man's favourite, sadly felt his loss; and when, years afterwards, he felt his foot first on the ladder which raised him to success, he made a joyful bonfire of the old chair which had carried the old soldier to the "*Hospital*," a refuge thought disgraceful to the good name of the house.

Meanwhile, the poet's childhood passed, like that of most poor children, in trying hard to pick up half-pence, which, though difficult to earn, were easy to be spent. His accomplishments were various, and their profit far from vast. He helped to glean the cornfields and to pluck the grapes. At fair time he held horses for the farmers, and regaled his eyes, no doubt, with the outside of the shows. He learned how to make faggots and to dig potatoes, at an age when school-

boys learn to dig for Latin roots. If his "Souvenirs" be credible, he went gaily to his work, and gave his mother all his earnings to help her frugal store. And he remembers, likewise, with less pardonable pride, how he led small bands of brigands to pilfer plum and cherry trees, and how he was, moreover, always chosen captain when these ragged little robbers played at being soldiers, and indulged in a war game.

"I should need a hundred trumpets to celebrate my victories," he cries in glad remembrance of his boyish triumphs.

Here the boy betrayed himself the father of the man, for Master Jacques in later life had certainly a taste for the loud sounding of trumpets, and especially his own.

When ten years old, the boy went for a short time to a day school, kept by a good Sister, who taught him gratis how to read. His further schooling was completed by a few months at a Seminary, where he wore a cassock and was privileged to sing—doubtless nasally—at church. But in spite of pious teaching he was fond of playing pranks. One day, having toppled the priest's housemaid from a ladder, and being locked up in a room where the priest kept his preserves, he was discovered emptying a jam-pot, and for such an act of sacrilege was sent away from school.

After this a veil discreetly drops on his proceedings, which could scarce have been more heinous than stealing the priest's jam. But we find the lad at sixteen apprenticed to a barber, and spending his dull, lonely evenings in a garret, where he began to court the Muses to the music of the squeaking and the scratching of the rats.

He read the fables rhymed by Florian, and tried, and doubtless failed, to imitate their grace. The Muse soon granted him a spark from her poetic fire, and smiled upon his efforts to fan it to a flame. Having few spare pence to spend, he made frugal use of curl-papers whereon to write his rhymes; and thus it chanced, from finding his scribbles in their hair, that the Agen ladies learned that Pegasus was stabled where their coiffeur combed perukes.

Mount a barber upon Pegasus and he probably will not ride far along the road to riches. But Jasmin's gift of poetry soon brought him into notice; and his recitals grew so popular that at eighteen the young shaver was bold enough to start in business

for himself. With greater boldness still, as timid bachelors may think, he was betrothed at twenty, and actually married ere he came to man's estate. Mariette, his bride of nineteen, had not a sou of "dot"; but she had many sterling qualities, which were far more precious, and ranked her "above rubies," of which she had no share. With a sad lack of gallantry, "Mes Souvenirs" say nothing of the wedding dress she wore; although they picture with minuteness "my newly dyed hat, my dress coat with blue facings, and my homespun linen shirt with calico front."

Figaro after marriage was hardly the same busy, bustling barber as before; but Jasmin, as a Benedict, found his business and his poetry prospering alike, and yearly bringing more unshaven clients to his shop. Mariette, having a frugal mind, like our old friend, Mrs. Gilpin, thought her husband wasted time and paper in his poetry, and threw his pens into the fire, in the futile hope of quenching his poetic flame. But finding it drew customers, like moths, into the shop, she wisely bought some goosequills to replace those she had burned, and thenceforth forgave her husband his flirtations with the Muse.

In the year '34, Charles Nodier, who was one of the Forty famed "Immortals," chanced to visit Agen, and to see the budding poet's modest business sign. "Jasmin, Coiffeur des Jeunes Gens"; thus briefly was the name emblazoned on the house-front, where a barber's basin dangled in the breeze. Just then there was a battle raging in the little shop. Entering as peacemaker, the skilled Academician was soon able to effect a ceasing of hostilities, and to give the combatants some excellent advice.

"Madame," said he, bowing, after hearing Jasmin recite some of his verses, "poetry knocks at your door, and may bring you good luck. And you, my friend, pray don't forget your razor; while polishing your rhymes."

Without the need of handling what Max Müller aptly terms "linguistic protoplasm," we may briefly touch the subject of the ancient Gascon language, wherein Jasmin chiefly wrote. Throughout the Middle Ages the language of south-western France, including the Gascon, was called *Langue d'Oc*; while that of the south-eastern country, including the Provençal, was termed *Langue d'Oïl*. Gascon and Provençal are alike related to the language of

the Troubadours—"the lovely but short-lived eldest daughter of the Latin," as Dr Smiles endearingly describes it, with a more than schoolboy love. This old Gascon language lingers still in the patois of old peasants in the neighbourhood of Agen, and it was from their mouths that Jasmin chiefly picked it up. Finding it sonorous and inspiring to his Muse, he gave himself great pains in enlarging his vocabulary. Like Walter Scott, while gleaning for his novels ancient scraps of Lowland Scotch, Jasmin gathered phrases from old women at their spinning-wheels, and peasants at their ploughs. Thus he gradually succeeded in putting upon paper words which probably had been unwritten before his time. Indeed, he fairly may be said to have rescued a fine language from being quite forgotten, as ere long it might have been in the clamour of new tongues.

Jasmin was aged twenty-four when he first essayed to sound this new string to his lyre. The first Gascon piece he wrote was a sentimental poem, a languishing romance tuned in a minor key, as may be gathered from its mournful title, "Let me die"—"Me cal Mouri." When composing it, says Sainte-Beuve—finest of French critics—Jasmin "had not quitted the guitar for the flageolet"; and his memory recalling "La Charmante Gabrielle," Sainte-Beuve declares that Jasmin is "the poet who is nearest to the realm of Henri the Fourth." Songs of birds, and sigh of wind, and many if not mostly other sounds of nature, are in a minor key; and the tone of Jasmin's poem may be guessed from the first verse, as given by Miss Costello:

Already sullen night comes sadly on,
And nature's form is clothed with mournful weeds;
Around the tower is heard the breeze's moan,
And to the nightingale the bat succeeds.
Oh! I have drained the cup of misery,
My fainting heart has now no hope in store.
Ah! wretched me! what have I but to die!
For I have lost my love for evermore.

"Me cal Mouri" was set to music and translated into French, and speedily grew popular, more popular indeed than the playful "Charivari," Jasmin's second Gascon poem, which soon was followed by a third, a funeral ode inspired by the death of a true patriot, General Foy. In the year '25, these three poems, with some others, were published in a volume called "Las Papillôtes," or in plain English, "Curl-papers," in memory of the method which the poet used to pen his early lines.

Jasmin had a voice full of sympathy

and pathos, flexibility, and fire. He recited his own poems with admirable skill; practice improving daily his great vocal powers. It soon grew to be the fashion to go and have your hair cut, or your chin shaved, at his shop, and to listen to his verses while he lathered you profusely, or held you by the nose. So the barber's business grew, as the rhymester's fame increased. Ladies called to have their hair dressed by the poet, who was clever as a perruquier; or they would pay him—of course extra—for a private visit and a special hearing of his poems at their house. "Las Papillôtes" rivalled the rich stream of Pactolus, and "rivulets of silver" flowed from that fertile source. With a pride we well may pardon, the poet tells us how he bought the house wherein he worked and wrote; and how he made a bonfire of the chair in which his grandfather was carried to the poor-house, and which recalled to mind too vividly the days when his poor mother was forced to sell her wedding-ring to find her children food. And so the first part of "Mous Soubenis" ends gaily with the stanza:

Quand Pagazo reguinno, et que d'un cot de pé
M'emboyo friza mas marotos,
Perdi moun ten, es bray, mais noun, pas moun papé,
Boti mous bès en papillotes!

which readers ignorant of Gascon may like better rendered thus:

When Pegasus kicks with a fling of his feet,
He sends me to curl on my hobby-horse fleet;
I lose all my time, true, not paper nor notes,
I write all my verses on my papillotes.

The curl-papers were honoured by a favourable critique by Sainte-Beuve, and likewise elicited the warm praise of Béranger; who, however, frankly owned that Gascon pleased him less than French. Indeed, he strongly recommended Jasmin to use the latter language, which would certainly attract a larger audience for his Muse. But Jasmin's actual hearers were vehement in applauding what perhaps they could not wholly comprehend. They fairly were bewitched by the magic of his voice, and his expressive tones and gestures were precisely to their taste. Certainly the words were musical in sound, and the simple thoughts were not unworthy of the words. Charles Nodier, who was no bad judge of poetry, declared that few writers had ever moved him more profoundly than the "Souvenirs" of Jasmin; and even went so far as to compare one of his couplets to Homeric verse:

Quand l'Auroro, fourrado en raoubo de sati,
Desparrouillo, sans brut, las partos del mati.

Stripped of rhyme and rhythm, the lines run in English thus :

When Aurora, enfurred in her robe of satin,
Unbars, without noise, the doors of the morning.

Dream if you like, says Nodier, "dream of the Aurora of Winter, and tell me if Homer could have better robed her in words. The Aurora of Jasmin is quite his own. 'Unbars the doors of the morning,' it is done without noise, like a goddess, patient and silent, who announces herself to mortals only by her brightness of light."

THE FALLS OF TROLLHATTAN.

I THINK upon the whole a man might as well journey on a glacier as in a Swedish goods train. The former would be much colder than the latter, even in winter, but it would scarcely seem more slow. The Swedes are not an excitable people. An average pace of from ten to twelve miles an hour does not irritate them at all; nor do they travail with wrath when the conductor at each little station flings the carriage door wide open, announces a halt of ten minutes or twenty minutes, and straightway lets in a surge of air at a temperature of, say, five degrees above zero. On the contrary. They do but turn on their hard seats like relieved leviathans, smile in a wooden way, and remark to each other: "We're getting on. We shall be at — by-and-by." Then they loll their heads out of the gap, and gaze at the little red station with its two or three fur-wrapped officials, looking like Russian Dukes, and continue so to gaze until the goods train gives a lazy jolt as a signal that it is about to saunter on to the next station. Anon, they resign themselves to "ennui" and silence for another spell. They stare at the opposite side of the car with fish-like placidity for fifteen minutes without winking, and only when one is half convinced that they are profoundly sunk in the joys of a career of nothingness — like an accomplished Buddhist — does the dreadful goods train thrill dislocatingly once again, and restore them to animation for the next stop.

It will be said: "Why travel by goods train?" My dear reader, you do not know upon what conditions the Swedish State-controlled railways are worked. There is an express at an early hour—for winter an extremely early hour—of the morning, and an express at a late hour of

the night. Even these are wretched examples of speed. But at other times you must pick and choose between goods trains—which always carry a few passenger-waggons sandwiched among their trucks of iron ore, stiff-frozen herrings, and butter-tubs. The chances of death in any form on a Swedish railway are quite infinitesimal. However, one cannot expect much in the way of sensational experiments, whether in speed or collision, from a land the State railways of which do not bring in a revenue of more than three or four hundred thousand pounds annually for the State exchequer. Sweden does well to be solicitous of the lives of its people. To a country of its size, with less than five millions inhabitants, population is of more consequence than money or speed.

For my part, in making my laggard way to Trollhattan from Mellerud the other January day, I accounted myself happy in the discovery that my neighbour in the car could talk English. He had lived in Scotland five years, in the interest of "piece goods," and boasted sinfully that during all that time he had never spent a Sunday out of bed. Like every other travelled Scandinavian I have met, he wished himself in Great Britain or America for life. He was a good-natured fellow, and loudly lamented that the frost on the window-panes prevented me from seeing the landscapes, in the midst of which we tarried long enough to be accounted a part of them. But I did not much regret the obduracy of the window-panes. I saw snatches of the country at each railway-station; and after Norway it may be said to be singularly devoid of interest. Gone are the bold snow-crowned mountains, with the fir-clad slopes and pinnacles, which are the inland characteristics of the country of fiords. We have instead a flattish, dull land, with thin snow on its ill-ploughed fields, relieved from the charge of absolute ugliness by the sombre shade of the patches of pines in the distance, and by the clear, frosty sky overhead. In summer it is a trifle more winsome. Then its many lakes are a mosaic of sunlight let into the land. But in winter they are only distinguishable from the level fields by the purer colour of their snow. Here and there you may see stumpy farmhouses painted vermilion or maroon, with long barns annexed. For the most part, however, Sweden's rustic dwellings on the west coast are commonplace, wooden sheds, not at all inviting to the eye.

After spending three hours over a journey of sixty kilometres, the train at length ran across a fine bridge spanning a river, which could not but be the Gotha, and Trollhattan was reached. The red glow of the western sky threw a charming glamour over the small town and the dark waters of the Gotha. There were blocks of ice in the stream, but the current was too strong for a general refrigeration. As I left the train, thankful at heart, I heard the roar of the famous falls in the distance, like the incoming of old ocean's tide upon a shingly shore.

Trollhattan, or "the home of the witches," is not yet a place of European fame comparable to the American, and, indeed, the world-wide fame of Niagara. One may go a little farther, and confess that the falls of the Gotha are not so startling as those which our American cousins share with the Canadians. But they press them closely in some respects. At any rate, Sweden, which is not a very go-ahead country, except in certain particulars known only to the people of Stockholm and experienced visitors, proposes that in the future this excellent bait for tourists shall be more noised abroad than in the past. Few resorts of their kind can be more charming in the dog days than one of these hotels on a wooded hill in the valley, with the brawling river at its base and the cool shade of the pines in its circumjacent gardens. All intelligent Swedes talk of Trollhattan as the finest collection of waterfalls in Europe. This concession may be allowed.

But in winter it is another thing. Trollhattan does not then expect visitors—unless they are a thought insane. It does not seem to occur to this busy little town of paper-makers, iron-workers, and mill-men, that half frozen waterfalls are a spectacle worth the trouble of inspecting.

I had premonition of this in the astonishment with which the dignified little boy in buttons of the hotel greeted my arrival at his establishment. But he soon recovered himself. Then he displayed all that admirable urbanity of manner which distinguishes the well-trained Swedish boy from either his British or American coeval. It is nothing less than a revelation of capability to see a Swedish boy become rigid and bow to a superior; and be it understood that here the laudable maxim that age implies superiority is taught implicitly. However, this boy—he was about ten years old—was quite too much for my

risible muscles. The way in which he stood to attention and bowed whenever he was so unfortunate as to catch my eye was new in my experience.

There is another thing though that the visitor to Sweden must steel himself to bear: the maid-servants curtsy when you bless them with a gratuity. This in the abstract is, of course, a simple enough function; but when they are pretty—as they often are—it is a trifle embarrassing to a man with an impressionable heart. I take it, the curtsy is not properly achieved unless the damsel looks up sweetly into her benefactor's face while she is bending her knees. On this subject I write with a certain authority, for I was rather reckless in gratuities when once I perceived how amply they were required.

I was the only visitor in the hotel, and was looked after with comforting assiduity by a grey-eyed girl, with the grace of a princess and an undeniably attractive face. She lit the stove, brought me warm water, regretted that the liquor laws of Sweden made it impossible for her to supply me with a little brandy, and afterwards urged me before I went forth into the moonlight to soothe my appetite with the "smörgåsbord." To tell the truth, the liquor laws of Scandinavia are sometimes a nuisance to the stranger. It is all very well that the towns should do their utmost to restrict the plague of drunkenness, and should themselves dispose of the profits of the spirit trade in good works, local and otherwise; but there are times and seasons when—if the teetotal orators will pardon me—a wineglass of cognac makes all the difference between living and dying. The unenlightened foreigner may not realise his situation until it be too late. He may awake agonisedly in his hotel to discover that he must do as best he can until one of the specifically licensed houses has been applied to. It is explained to you that you must keep your spirits by you; but it is both inconvenient and unseemly to have bottles of brandy among one's shirts and neckties; nor does it, to English eyes, look well for a fashionably-dressed gentleman in his hotel on an evening to draw forth from his pocket a large flask of spirituous punch, with which private store he proceeds to indulge himself.

The smörgåsbord—literally, the buttered goose table—though a fair institution, is no adequate atonement for this insult to Messrs. Brandy, Rum, Whisky, and Co. It consists, as my readers may know, of a

side table furnished with bits of fish, ham, meat, and other things. The fish is nearly sure to be raw. You may eat it in morsels, with hard-boiled eggs or with oat cake or bread. There is also butter, and cheese, and pickles; and you are supposed to vary the entertainment with one or two glasses of corn brandy, a very different spirit to cognac, which may be contained in vessels like tea-urns, with taps needing to be turned. The Swedes use the smörgåsbord as a whet for dinner or supper. Anglo-Saxons, at first acquaintance, are prone to imagine that it is all the meal. In this matter I have heard a gentle waitress reproach a countryman of mine inferentially, in a way that ought to have staggered his heart. The ignorant gentleman went from one little dish to another, and, like a swarm of locusts, left nothing in his track. He also tossed off the thimblefuls of corn brandy, as if they had been so much lemonade. "Monsieur," murmured the girl at length, "your dinner is ready!" and she pointed to his soup, which smoked for him at the dining-table proper.

The air was nipping when I left the well-warmed hotel for my introduction to the waterfalls. A full moon shone in the east, and gave quite a theatrical look to the little town. There was a small bridge near, and a short row of small wooden houses bearing precisely the appearance of the edifices at the wings of the stage in a melodrama. Moreover, to the windows of these houses hung transparent blinds, which were exactly adapted to heighten the stage effect. Upon one blind, thanks to the oil lamp behind it, was seen to be represented a substantial castle, with elegant trees flanking it, and clouds above, after the manner of Claude Lorraine. Another blind depicted a hawking scene. The baron of the group was a superb person, and, as became him, he was evidently paying his attentions in no half-hearted way to the damsel in swansdown and minever, who looked so bewitching as she stood gazing doubtfully at the fierce-beaked bird which some one had set upon her wrist.

These blinds, like the wooden houses—of course, they were really of canvas mounted on frames—were stage properties of the conventional kind. As I crossed the little bridge already mentioned, in full radiance of the moonlight, I involuntarily trampled in the complete assurance that this was just the spot for

the sudden apparition of the villain of the play, cloaked, and hoarse as a raven, the while he made his grim proposition to me, with a glittering dagger uplifted in his right hand to mark time to his words.

But to my relief the villain came not. The next moment I was in unqualified shadow again, and I felt that his opportunity had passed. A stiff-tailed cat mewed excitedly in front of me as it trod timidly over the frozen snow, and the voice of Trollhattan's waters grew louder.

The broad space of the Gotha was at hand, with its factories lower down clanking their machinery, and on this romantic night insulting the moon with the garish glow of their electric lamps.

This is another item in which Sweden somewhat discomforts us. She has taken up Mr. Edison's various inventions with a thoroughness worthy of a land ten times as rich and populous as she is. It will surprise some of my readers to know that her town of Haparanda, nearly on the sixty-sixth degree of latitude, has been well acquainted with electricity for some time. As a speculation the process of illuminating Haparanda up to date can hardly be praised; but as enterprise it is magnificent. So, too, with Sweden's other large towns. It is all one whether you go abroad in them at twelve o'clock a.m. or twelve o'clock p.m. You can read your newspaper in the highway equally well at either hour. Of course, too, in Haparanda's case, where in winter the daylight is not worth mentioning, the electric light is a very potent substitute for the sun.

The telephone, also, has been accepted in Sweden with remarkable enthusiasm. The official statistical record tells us that whereas in 1882 there were but three hundred and ten kilometres of this useful wire in the land under State control, in 1889 the length had increased to eight thousand eight hundred and forty-two kilometres, exclusive of about thirty-seven thousand kilometres of private wires. In such towns as Gothenburg and Stockholm you see telephone kiosks in almost every street.

But I am straying very far from Trollhattan, thanks to the electric lights which shimmer on the portals of the factories which seem to absorb the upper falls. Guided by the thunder of the waters, I came at length to the vicinity of the first pair of cataracts. The river, it must be explained, in its procession from Lake Wenern to the sea, has to fall about a

hundred and forty feet. Of this fall it gets through no less than one hundred and eight feet in the course of not quite a mile in the pine-wooded glen of Trollhattan. There are three emphatic couples of waterfalls of a notably impressive kind, for the stream is broad and deep before it gets convulsed, and the channels by which it is hurled to a lower level are only about a quarter of its width above Trollhattan. Just at the site of the falls, and, indeed, partly the occasion of them, are several rocky islets, some clothed with pines, and the others covered with industrial works, in the aid of which the water power is very precious. The total force of the falls is reckoned at the stupendous figure of two hundred and twenty-five thousand horse power. For the sake of commerce one may excuse this hedge of factories about the most picturesque scene in Sweden; but, confessedly, one cannot now admit that the glen is likely to have much attraction for the witches of old who cast the veil of romance over it—at least unless they are very modern witches, who do not mind being intruded on at every moment by broad-shouldered operatives with grease-polished knees and arms, and with seal-skin caps on their sturdy heads.

To get at the upper and most remarkable falls, therefore, one has to force the barricade of the factories. In summer there is a thoroughfare for the purpose, with little automatic wickets which open in response to silver coins put into a slot. But on this moonlight night I found the conventional highway fast and padlocked, with deep snow on the track. The whirr of machinery resounded on all sides as if in a competition of noise with the tumultuous river. By judicious groping, however, I obtained ample satisfaction. I descended an iced ladder towards a little gallery inches thick in ice, and there, under a fringe of great icicles beaded with granules of spray frozen to the semblance of coral, I stayed long, level with the middle of the famous Toppö Fall, and so near it that the water now and again in its agitation throbbed icily upon me. As a spectacle it contented. It sent the imagination off at a tangent into a field of marvelling. It awoke fancies and aspirations tinted with sublimity kindred to that excited by the starlit empyrean. Where I stood I was in deep shadow, but the moon was upon the Toppö Fall, and also on the dark pines of the opposite bank of the river.

I tarried here feeling the pulse of the

waterfall as it were—for my gallery seemed to sway with the shocks—for many minutes. Now and then I looked up to see the head of a timber millman peering over at me, or half-a-dozen such heads; but the good fellows did not interfere with my rhapsody. They may have spoken, if only in warning—for the situation was not an orthodox one—but how was I to hear them with this frantic bellow in my ears? I looked at the boiling, confused heap of white water at my feet, and at the furious precipice of the stream, and had I looked a little longer than I did I believe I should have yielded to its mesmeric influence and dived from my parapet with a shout, to join the troop of spirits and elves who doubtless hold revel beneath the flood. I thought of the man who not so long ago went over this fall in a boat. He waved his hat on the brink, and that was the end of him. For genuine thrill and promptitude, there can be no death to compare with such as this. Ere you have done exulting in the spirit of maniac pride which has possessed you, the thousands of tons of the waters are upon your head, and you have done with this life utterly.

It was odd to recur from this forty-two feet waterfall to the men above, methodically adapting a few rivulets stolen from it for the slicing of pine-trunks into sections. They went to and fro in the mingled light of moon and applied electricity—carrying logs on their shoulders, or pushing along the tram lines trollies laden with wooden cubes or chips. When I reappeared among them they paused to stare as if I had been one of Trollhattan's witches lured into activity by the beauty of the night. But the machinery went round and round without intermission. It, at any rate, was impassive. The river has called into motion a vigour of mechanical life worth all the trolls that the Scandinavian fancy ever generated.

From one machine yard I passed to another. It was nine o'clock at night, but Trollhattan works without regard for the coming and going of the sun. Why should it not? There is no end to the power poured into its factories. This power is money as surely as if the golden pieces ran down the gutters instead of ice-cold water. Therefore, the men come and go in relays, and there is no night among these whizzing wheels and hissing saws.

Still under the clear evening sky, I climbed towards the irregular rocky heap in the middle of the glen, with a new red

church on its summit and a gilded vane which caught the moonlight. There were baby falls here, there, and everywhere, showing that man and nature have at different times plucked at the stream and diverted threads of it. But after the great Toppö Fall they met with no recognition.

Then the spidery frame of a suspension bridge, high over the main river, appeared to the right, connecting the two banks of the Gotha. Here again was a royal perch. The bridge is new. The kingly coronet which studs its balustrade, and the gilding of its ornamentation, were conspicuous in the pallid light. The view from it at this romantic hour was very fascinating. Above, the Toppö Falls, with their mate the Tjuf Falls, divided by an islet, were a strong, turbulent white mark on the river; and higher still were the Gullö Falls. Below, the river widened, with the silvery reach of the Hell Falls, where the pine-clad banks again contracted as if to hug the perturbed stream into renewed quiescence; while some sixty feet under the bridge itself is the furious broad Stampström Fall. This is not really so impressive as the Toppö Fall, though it is difficult to measure impressions as if they were strips of carpet. One's perch of observation is so admirable that something of the majesty of the more comprehensive view gets cast upon the Stampström Fall, and it benefits thereby in retrospect.

On the further side of the river the bridge—thus hung like a cobweb over it—is attached to the rocks, where the pines grow straight and dark. Here, under the moon, there was a memorable effect of snow, lunar light, and blackness. A workman, swinging along from the mills and homeward bound, could not much disturb the charm of the scene. Through the rifts of the trees the white rage of the river could be seen up stream and down; and over the way the tall Gothic church on its perch, with its vane looking like a disestablished planet.

But there was to be a set-off to all this perfect sweetness and light of Dame Nature's contriving. I came to a convenient break in the trees, where the outlook from the rock wall on the other side of the road was broader and more engaging. And here there was to be seen, staring full at the face of the disgusted moon, the advertisement of a Trollhattan clothier, done large in black letters so that they could be read from the very town itself.

His materials, he declared thus for the edification of Madame Moon, were the best and cheapest to be had in the place.

That is the worst feature in the Swedes. If they would but be confident in the abilities and gifts they have received straight from their Maker, they would be a delightful people, without much exception. They are born polite, good-hearted, honest, and sufficiently good-looking. But they have had it drummed into them by publicists and others that they are a 'second-rate, or even a third-rate nation. I dare say their school books err in the same way, differing totally in this respect from Anglo-Saxon school books, which teach Anglo-Saxon boys that their race is born to the pre-eminence it tells them it has already obtained. The consequence is that they mistrust themselves and their own instincts. The Germans twirl a good many of them round their short thumbs, and excite emulation in others. There is also the French influence, though this is not reckoned nowadays so strong as it used to be. Chief of all is the well-nigh irresistible contagion of American men and manners. It is perfectly nauseating to hear the returned American-Swede flout his English in the face of the British traveller. He "guesses" and "calculates" about five times as much as the genuine Yankee, and the American 'cuteness looks out of his eyes in a very ugly manner. He is generally to be found as a hotel-porter. Occasionally, however, one meets him travelling "en prince," with his hands in his pockets, and his legs anywhere but where they ought to be.

This particular advertisement at Trollhattan is of course due to the American epidemic. There's not a doubt some one has told in the town about the remarkable poster embellishments of Niagara; and so Trollhattan in its turn has had to submit to defilement.

When I had read about the clothier's unrivalled goods, I turned and recrossed the bridge, toiled up the slippery snow thoroughfare of Trollhattan—with its shops full of German rubbish—upon which mild lamps, even at this late hour, cast a lenient lustre, and demanded supper in my hotel. The grey-eyed girl—dear, unspoilt damsel—showed as much gratified animation as if I had been her long-lost brother come back in tolerable health but with perfectly empty pockets. She did her best for me, and stood by with modest

smiles while I ate the meal. And afterwards the automatically respectful little page-boy, or whatever he was, bowed me into my chamber, put his hand into the stove to ascertain that it was still warm, and wished me a courtly "good night."

At no very early hour the next day I renewed my acquaintance with the Falls. It was nine o'clock ere I turned out into the freezing air, and lo! the sun and the moon were both in the horizon as they had been some sixteen hours ago. This time, however, they had changed quarters. The arena of sky between them was cloudless, and the atmosphere was clear as a mountain brook.

I strolled down by the river, which was now in a state of tolerable liveliness. Spacious reaches of it were frozen two or three hundred yards above the first of the falls. But this did not hinder the Trollhattan people from using it in divers ways. Their little ships were fast bound in it—caught on their journey between the North Sea and the great lake a few miles to the north-east, or perhaps even Stockholm itself. They, however, were to be seen sawing at the ice, and cutting long strips of it as if it had been bride-cake sugar. By twos at a time, other men carried these portly blocks to the shore, where they were straightway warehoused in the red buildings convenient for the purpose. In some of these buildings they were crushing it, and piling it about their beer barrels. But it will probably lie awhile in the other depositories until the spring gives it a chance of being shipped to England.

Elsewhere were prettier scenes. Under the blue sky, momentarily deepening to the Italian intensity it acquired by noon, little groups of washerwomen and girls were seen kneeling about the river ice, hard at work. A little tank space had been cut here and there, the four corners of the area being indicated by four blocks of ice large as tombstones, and as many little Christmas trees, which are in Scandinavia largely sacrificed in winter for this kind of service. The ladies bent over the dark well, and thus performed their useful labours. One could with difficulty dispossess the mind of the idea that they were incurring a frightful risk in thus crowding together where the ice was already fractured. But experience had doubtless taught them how far they may trust their native stream at such a time.

Add to these gratifying industrial in-

cidents the spectacle of little girls and boys skating and sliding on the river, the very vivid green hue of the Gotha in the distance where it ran rapidly and unfrozen towards the first of its falls, the rocky, fir-clad banks with their blanket of snow, and the mild face of the departing moon apparently caught by one of the twigs of the dark-tinted trees—this all in the broadest and most jocund mood of wintry daylight; and you may conceive that Trollhattan was a sight to cheer the heart.

I revisited all the falls and again admired the majesty of their volume. This, however, as may be supposed, is in winter much less than in summer or the end of spring, when the snows have melted. Besides, a vast deal of the water hung stiff and still in fantastic curtains. The icicles under the sunlight took their proper tints. Some were pearl-white, and some were a turquoise-blue, while yet others were a delicate salmon and primrose hue, or even the colour of mahogany. There is no need to dispel the illusion of all this beauty by analysing the source of its variegation. The battalions of icicles were not a whit less fair to see when one perceived that they owed much of their motley gear to the various oozes from the works which they adorned. It is well with variegated icicles—as with jujubes—to be to their origin "a little blind," if one is to thoroughly enjoy them.

It would be an unpardonable slight to Trollhattan if no mention were made of the huge Gotha locks as well as its waterfalls. These suffer more from the winter than do the waterfalls. They are then in absolute disuse. In summer one may see big ships lifted gradually up the glen until the hundred-feet ascent of Trollhattan is safely made. All day and all night the work goes on, and one may then genuinely doubt whether Nature's show or man's is the more alluring. But in winter the sluices are frozen. Some of the channels are so nearly void of water that one may see their smooth, well-laid bottoms of granite cubes, slightly concave. The locks are shut, or half-shut, it does not matter which; they are as Jack Frost has taken them. And the small boys of the district skate up and down between them, some with baskets of things which their careful mothers have bid them buy in Trollhattan.

Akervass, the village of these sluices, is about two miles from Trollhattan, and nestles at the lower end of the waterfall glen round a wide pool of the Gotha. The

river here looks calm and innocent enough, and in its waters you may see the blue sky, the pine-trees and their banks, and the white villas among the pines, all mirrored tranquilly.

For a health-restoring sojourn Akervass would be better than Trollhattan. The excitement of the upper glen is lacking; but it is within half an hour's walk among granite rocks mossed with lichens, heather, and wild flowers, and with nothing but the graceful dark arms of the pines intervening between you and the blue heavens. This is its summer presentment. I suppose every inhabitant of the glen would declare that the Gotha valley is only beautiful in the warm months. But I doubt if it could fascinate more than upon a cloudless winter's day, with twenty degrees of frost in the air.

MARA.

A STORY IN EIGHT CHAPTERS.

PROLOGUE.

THE sun was sinking slowly behind the Connemara Mountains, and lighting up with its last lingering rays a house that stood by itself on the hillside. No sign of life made itself seen or heard there; the wild mass of tangled weeds and flowers, calling itself a garden, was deserted; not even a dog broke by its presence the dreary solitude. Down below, in the valley, lay a few scattered houses, and all round stretched the blank moorland which is characteristic of Western Ireland, treeless, flowerless, its monotony only varied by the great grey stones and boulders.

But this house was not entirely untenanted, for in a room facing the mountains were two people.

A lady was sitting with her arms leaning on the table, her head bowed down upon them, her whole form shaking with tearless sobs; while standing at the window, drumming with angry fingers on the panes, was a boy of about fourteen.

Presently he glanced round impatiently, and yet with a boy's rough attempt at consolation.

"I say, mother; come, don't cry. He isn't worth it. You're not really sorry he's gone, are you?"

She raised her head reprovingly.

"Demie, you must not speak so of him. After all, though he has left us so cruelly

and unkindly, you must remember that he is your father still——"

"My father!" interrupted the boy with a contemptuous laugh. "A pretty father, and a pretty husband to you he's been! Why, he's treated you as he daren't have treated a servant ever since I can remember. And what has he ever done for me? And now to leave us just when we're so poor to go off to America! After all, it's the best thing he could have done, though; we shall get on much better without him."

"Demie, you are not to speak so bitterly of him. You only remember him at his worst. He was so good to me once, long ago, before we were so poor."

"It must have been very long ago, then," persisted the boy doggedly, "for my memory goes back a good way, and I can't remember anything good about him. Well, anyway, he's gone, and may bad luck go with him. The coward, to go and leave you like this!"

"Demie, you should try to forgive him."

"I won't even try, so there! I hate him now, and always; and I'll never speak of him again. I won't even be called by his name; I'll be Desmond Blake in future, my second name, never Desmond O'Hara again."

"Oh, my boy, don't be so bitter!" she cried imploringly. "You cannot throw off your name; it is absurd to think of it."

"I said it, and I mean it," replied Desmond, in a tone of firm decision which was unusual in a lad of his age. "Come, mother, don't cry any more. It won't do any good."

He moved from the window, where he had been standing, and took up a photograph that stood on the mantelpiece, and for a few minutes mother and son gazed at it in silence. It was the portrait of a man, still young and very handsome, whose regular features were wonderfully like those of the boy who looked at the pictured face. Then Mrs. O'Hara, with a low cry of sorrow, dropped her head once more upon her hands, while over her son's face passed a look of invincible hatred and contempt; and, with a quick motion, he tore the portrait across, and flung the pieces into the fire.

His boyhood ended on that day, for henceforth he had his own battles to fight, and his own way to make in "this workaday world."

CHAPTER I.

TWENTY years have passed away; a long space of time which must necessarily have wrought changes everywhere, though, perhaps, in Ireland least of all; for, somehow, despite the attempts of politicians, philanthropists, and all the other worthy people who interest themselves about that troublesome island, and endeavour to alter its condition for the better—or worse!—it yet seems to cling, with a marvellous tenacity, to “the things that be.”

It was Sunday morning, a fresh, bright day in the middle of May, and on the uneven patch of lawn in front of the house I have already introduced my reader to, a man was sitting lazily, pipe in mouth; the same man who, in his boyhood, called himself Desmond O'Hara, but whom all who knew him personally and by name now styled Desmond Blake. The years which had brought so little alteration elsewhere had changed him in everything. Before, he had had all to look forward to; his life must be made and lived, with no helping hand stretched out to him; the future, then, held nothing but hard work, when other boys of his age were playing, with an uncertain prospect of anything beyond. Now the uncertainty was gone; his life was made, and made well; he had fought his way alone, and had succeeded, and won fortune solely through his own mighty will and unflagging industry. It had not been all plain sailing during those twenty years, for success is a finished coquette, and seldom yields easily to any one of her wooers. How he had contrived to educate himself after his father's desertion was a matter of wonder to his mother, for it had been a hard struggle for her to live, far less to pay for his school expenses. How he had managed to work up for, and, finally, to pass the examination for the Irish Constabulary, while earning money all the time, even Desmond himself could hardly have told; but he did both, and once in the Constabulary, the attention of his superiors was soon drawn to him for his energy and promptness in every difficulty.

Not long after his entering the force a chance came to him of exercising the great talent he possessed—that of detective work. He was a born detective; it was his vocation. Very soon it began to be the usual thing for any criminal case that baffled the police, any mystery, to be put into Blake's hands, in the confident cer-

tainly that, sooner or later, the offenders would pay the penalty of their misdeeds.

So, gradually but surely, he worked his way on, never relaxing his energy, never losing ground by a rash action or a thoughtless mistake, and at thirty-four he was a County Inspector, with the prospect of still more in the future.

His mother had always lived in the lonely mountain house where we saw her first, despite her son's oft-spoken wish that she would make her home with him. For years he had urged her repeatedly to leave her home, to live with him, always with the same answer—that she was too old to change, and was fond of the old house; till one day, soon after he had first gone to Longford, when he had as usual broached the subject:

“I say, mother, you might just as well come and keep house for me in Longford.”

“Why, dear?” she asked quietly.

“Why, because I am, well, not exactly ‘a lone widder,’ but just in the same plight. Man was not made to live alone, you know, mother mine, and why should I?”

“Why don't you marry, and so obtain a companion?” said his mother laughingly.

“Marry—I?” Desmond shook his head with a droll look of dismay. “Why must I be condemned to marry when I have a mother who could do just as well, if she only would?”

“Silly boy! Wait till you fall in love with some one, and then see what you will say about marriage!”

“I'm quite content to wait. Well, now, will you be agreeable and come?”

“Demie, I; would rather not come; I am very fond of this house; you don't know how I love it. It has always been my home.”

“Do you love the house or me best?” quoth her son.

“My dear, how can you say such things?” she cried reproachfully. “You know you are all I have in the world to care for.”

“Well, then, since you cannot enjoy at one and the same time my society and the occupation of your house—and you say you prefer me to the house—why not be logical and have me?” pursued Desmond, with calm pertinacity. “Come, mother, there's some other reason why you don't want to leave the house. What is it?”

The colour flooded Mrs. O'Hara's pale face, as she strove in vain to meet her son's look.

"What other reason should there be?" she faltered at last. "Don't worry me, dear."

"Tell me what it is," Desmond answered in that quiet, masterful tone of his, which gained most people to his will, and in a few minutes his mother gave way.

"I—I cannot go away from here, Demie," she said faintly. "You will think I am weak, and without pride, but I believe that—that some day—he will come back to me, here."

Desmond's arm fell from round her, and with an angry oath:

"I guessed as much! I knew it all along! Mother, mother, how is it that you don't hate him as I do? What awful power of forgiveness is there in your nature that you can love him still—love him, and wait for his return as though he had never wronged you in leaving you to battle with the world alone but for a boy whose best efforts could do nothing for years to help you? There, mother," he went on, seeing his mother's frightened face, "I have said more than I should have done, but I feel strongly about it; you must forgive me and forget what I have said, and I will not press you again to leave here. But I cannot forgive him; I hate him, and shall always do so, and, while I live, if I can help it, he shall never see you again."

Mrs. O'Hara said no more, knowing that his hatred was too deeply rooted ever to die out, and that the subject had better not be mentioned between them.

"Desmond, will you come to church with me?" Mrs. O'Hara asked, coming out on to the lawn on this Sunday morning I have alluded to.

Desmond looked round in lazy surprise.

"Church already!" he repeated. "All right! But you don't want to start now, do you? It's not nearly time."

"Well, it isn't quite time, but Toby is at the gate, and I can't keep him waiting, you know."

Toby was the pony, whom Mrs. O'Hara cherished as a dear old friend, and would never let her son replace with a better. He had many little peculiarities, some of which would, perhaps, have been better dispensed with, such as refusing obstinately to ascend a hill with a greater weight than he was accustomed to at his heels, and stopping occasionally to nibble the grass by the roadside, despite all remonstrance; but his mistress loved him, and forgave all his little ways affectionately.

Desmond laughed at the solicitude for the pony.

"Well, you drive on slowly; I shall soon catch you up, and then I'll make old Toby put the pace on."

Irish Protestant churches in country districts are not remarkable for good singing, or particularly distinguished by the eloquence of their clergy, and Desmond's attention wandered a good deal during the somewhat long service. He looked about him for all the people he knew, noted their presence or absence, and was just beginning to regret his big chair and pipe in the sunshine at home, when he caught sight of a face that seemed strange to him, and yet withal oddly familiar, as if he had seen it and known it years ago. It was a woman's face, or rather a girl's, a face framed in a wavy mass of red-gold hair, which the sun as it shone through the stained-glass windows turned into a perfect aureole of gold. That hair somehow fascinated him, for look where he would, his eyes always returned to it, caught by the gleam of the golden mass under the tiny hat the girl wore.

Even long sermons come to an end, and as the congregation filed slowly down the narrow aisle, Desmond found opportunity to whisper to his mother an enquiry about the unknown girl.

"Mother, who is that girl? There, she's only just in front!"

"Where? What girl?" asked Mrs. O'Hara, not unreasonably, for at least half-a-dozen girls were in front of them, and her son's definition had been hardly precise.

"Why, there, of course," muttered Desmond, crossly. "Just in front with the old man. She's got a white dress on."

"Oh, I see! Her name is Mara Haynes."

"Mara Haynes," repeated Desmond slowly, his eyes on the graceful figure in front. "A pretty name and a pretty owner. She's the loveliest girl I ever saw," he added, half to himself.

"She is very pretty," agreed his mother; "but I don't know that I admire her so very much, Demie. That is her father with her. They have only come here for the summer, and are, I fancy, very poor."

"Do you know them?"

"Only slightly. I don't care to make new friends, you know, so I never called. But I met them at the Rector's one day."

"You shall introduce me," said Desmond decidedly. "I should like to know them."

Mrs. O'Hara agreed meekly, knowing by experience that when Desmond wanted anything he never rested till he got it, and in a few moments the necessary words were spoken, and he was walking side by side with Miss Haynes along the road.

"Well, what do you think of her, Demie?" asked Mrs. O'Hara, some ten minutes later, as Desmond helped her into the car that was waiting for them, and persuaded Toby to make a start.

He laughed jokingly.

"Why, what sort of an opinion do you expect me to pronounce after only a few minutes' acquaintance? But one thing I'm sure of. She's the most beautiful girl I ever met. Now, then, Toby, get on, old man. You needn't pretend that this is a hill."

CHAPTER II.

"DESMOND! Desmond! stop one moment!"

Mrs. O'Hara ran downstairs and out through the open hall-door, where Desmond was standing, examining a small fishing-rod.

"What's the matter, mother? Of course I'll stop as long as you please. There's no hurry."

"Where are you going? Fishing?"

"I'm going to give Miss Haynes a lesson," answered Desmond, his attention still concentrated on the rod. "She says she wants to learn how to cast, and, of course, I offered to lend her a rod."

"Do you really want to go to-day, Demie? Can't you put it off? The Morley girls are coming here to have tea, and they will think you might have been in to meet them. And you see so much of Miss Haynes."

Desmond put his hand on his mother's shoulder with a laugh and pretended look of dismay, but the colour had rushed to his face at her last allusion.

"My dear mother, why should you doom me to such an afternoon of martyrdom? Of all the girls I know, those Morleys are about the most uninteresting. Besides, Miss Haynes has promised to go this afternoon. I could hardly draw back, could I? Perhaps I'll come back in time to do the civil to the Morleys. I must be off now, so good-bye."

"Very well," she assented smiling; but the smile faded, and a look of anxiety came in its place as she watched him out of sight. It was always Miss Haynes now, Desmond never seemed happy away from her side.

Three weeks had gone by, and he was still lingering on at home, oblivious of time and everything else, save the one face that had grown to be all the world to him, whose owner he loved, even on this short acquaintance, to the exclusion of every other object. He had seen Mara Haynes very often during those three weeks, had ridden, walked, sung duets with her, till it seemed as though memory could date no further back than the day on which he met her, for he could imagine no life now without her.

And Mara encouraged him, drew him on in the most delicate, irresistible way imaginable till she saw that she had him hopelessly in her toils. She knew that of all her adorers, and they had been many, none had loved her so deeply and absorbingly as this man. Should she marry him? Should she make him happy or miserable? Either way it would be amusing, for he would do nothing by halves, he would be so intensely happy, or so utterly miserable; and Mara was something of a dissector of human nature, and strong emotion interested her, as it usually does people who are themselves incapable of it. But she soon made up her mind that when Blake proposed to her she would accept him. She probably would never make a better match, and possibly would not do as well again. So he always found himself welcome at her side.

Desmond meanwhile walked on fast, eagerness and impatience visible in face and stride. Did not every moment seem wasted that was spent away from her? He stopped at last at the little house in the valley where Mara and her father were living, and his eyes lighted up, for in the doorway Mara was standing.

"I thought you were never coming," she cried; "you promised to take me fishing at four o'clock, and it's half-past now. Is not that disgraceful?"

"Am I really so late?" asked Desmond contritely. "I thought I was in time; but at any rate I am the chief sufferer."

"Why? I don't agree to that. I have been waiting for half an hour."

"And I have lost half an hour of your society," retorted Desmond, who, like a genuine Irishman, was never at a loss for a pretty thing to say.

Mara shook her head laughing.

"Blarney for ever? It is a good thing that I know you too well by this time to believe in you. Well, shall we start at once?"

But when they had reached the trout stream, Mara did not display any great enthusiasm over the fishing she had been so anxious to learn. It was too hot, she said, and the fly, instead of alighting neatly in the place where it was meant to go, would invariably catch with most fly-like obstinacy either on a rock or branch, or even occasionally in Mara's dress.

She put down the rod at last impatiently.

"I don't believe I shall ever do it! Why won't that stupid fly go right? I had no idea fishing was so difficult."

"Most things are difficult till you know how to do them," quoth Desmond sententiously. "Don't give up, Miss Haynes. There is nothing in the world which we cannot do or get if we only try hard enough."

Mara looked at him curiously.

"Do you really think so? Well, did you never fail in getting or doing anything?"

Blake laughed.

"You'll think me a conceited ass," he said frankly; "but, honestly, I don't think I ever did. Everything I ever tried for I have got in the end, just because I will not be beaten. It's merely a question of dogged obstinacy, you know."

"H'm!" said Miss Haynes reflectively.

"Well, perhaps it may answer for you, but I don't know whether it would with every one. I am perfectly convinced that if I fish till Doomsday that fly will never go anywhere but where it ought not to go, so I shall try no more. Now, don't lecture on perseverance, but let us talk comfortably. It is really too hot to fish," she added, smiling at him in a beseeching way that would have made it hard for a man to lecture her on anything.

"One moment, then, while I take the fly off. Will you come out again, some day soon, and have another try at it?"

"I don't know," said Mara with a sigh. "Perhaps we may not stay here much longer."

Desmond dropped the line, and wheeled round to face her.

"Going!" he repeated. "But not yet?"

"I don't know," said Mara again. "Father wants to get back to Galway, where we live. You see, he only came on some business of the gentleman he is agent for, and it is nearly done now. So I'm afraid we shall have to go soon."

"You shall not go!" he muttered, and in a quick moment of impulse his arms were round her, and the golden head pressed against his shoulder. "You shall not go! Mara, you must stay—stay with me! I cannot live without you!"

For a moment she was motionless, for he had taken her by surprise, then she wrenched herself away from him and burst into a mocking peal of laughter.

"Well, that was unexpected! How dare you embrace me in that manner, Mr. Blake?"

"Forgive me!" he cried. "I ought not to have done it, but I hardly knew anything, except that I couldn't let you go from me. You must have seen I loved you, Mara. You are not really angry, are you?"

The girl sat down coolly on the grass, her self-possession restored. She had planned that he should propose to her—had even known that he could not hear her mention her departure without betraying himself, but although she meant to accept him, she was determined to make him pay first for having caught her in his arms in that tumultuous way.

"And so you consider that I am to know by instinct when I am beloved, and so submit to any indiscriminate caresses on the ground that this or that person has an unspoken affection for me. Is that it?"

"Don't joke now, I can't bear it!" said Blake shortly, as he sat down on the ground by her side, and looked gravely into the beautiful, satirical face. "Mara, you are cruel to play with me. Don't you see that your answer means life or death to me? I hardly dare to think of what life might be with you, and without you—it would be worse than death!"

"And so I am to decide whether it is to be life or death—that is, life with me or life without me," said Mara smilingly. "What if I say that it is to be—with-out me?" she ended.

Blake suddenly reached towards her, and held her arm in a grip that frightened and almost hurt her.

"Do you know what a man's love is, that you trifle with it in this way?" he said in a low voice. "I am no boy to be played with. Answer me, Mara, now, at once."

"No, then!" cried the girl angrily. "Since you want your answer so badly, take it. I will not marry you, just because you all but order me to do so. No!"

His hand dropped from her arm, and a

look came into his eyes that made even Mara Haynes, practised coquette as she was and used to these scenes, feel sorry.

"You refuse me?" he said slowly. "Mara, forgive me for my impatience, and do not answer me hastily. You cannot mean it. You are saying it to try me."

"What a dreadfully conceited speech!" said Mara provokingly. "Is it, then, so absolutely impossible that any woman should refuse you?"

"For the last time, do you mean it?" he repeated steadily.

"Why should I not mean it?" persisted Mara stoutly. "I will say 'No' again, if I was not explicit enough."

Desmond covered his face with his hands for a few moments, then he raised it and looked at her.

"I don't know why you should torture me like this," he said slowly, "nor why you should have flirted with me, only to bring me to this; for you have flirted with me, Mara. You have led me to think that you loved me; you have never discouraged me till now. And I ask you now to tell me why you have done it."

She stole one glance at his grave, set face, and then looked down, her fingers idly pulling the grass at her side. She had punished him enough.

"You—you were so impulsive," she faltered. "You ought not to have done what you did."

Blake bent towards her, a sudden hope in his eyes.

"Are you still angry with me for that? Is it out of anger that you have hurt me so cruelly? Oh, Mara, forgive me. Take back what you have said. If you have not been deceiving me, if you care ever so little for me, tell me now."

Mara did not reply, only bent her head lower and lower, but something in her downcast face made Desmond bend closer to her, and take the hand that was nearest to him.

"Tell me, Mara," he whispered. "Oh, my darling, if you've any pity, don't keep me in this suspense!"

The girl suddenly lifted her head, and smiled straight into his eyes.

"You have conquered! Yes, I do love you, Desmond. I was only cross before."

Did she love him as his arms closed round her, and his lips met hers? Did she love him as she saw his face then, and heard his passionate, half broken words? For a moment she thought so, then she laughed to herself at the idea, and watched with a sort of indulgent amusement her lover's joy, thinking meanwhile of what idiocy a man is capable when he is in love. Then she thought of the relief it would be to marry him and escape from the poverty that had oppressed her all her life; but no thought occurred to her mind of the man who gave her a love as mighty as it was true and chivalrous.

"Why did you refuse me at first, Mara?" Desmond asked presently.

"I suppose because I was angry with you," she answered.

"What a bad reason! Was that it? You nearly broke my heart in those few minutes, Mara. Was that punishment enough for my offence?"

"Did you care as much as that? But I was so angry, I almost hated you."

"Have you forgiven me now?" he whispered.

She laughed as she answered:

"Yes, I suppose I must forgive you now. But you are repeating the offence."

He laughed, too, as he held her the closer.

"Then if you have forgiven me, kiss me." He bent his head down to her, and his face grew almost white with intensity as she gave him the caress he asked for. "Darling!" he muttered, "may Heaven deal with you as you deal with my love, and keep you true to me! For if you fail me I shall die!"

Just for a moment she forgot herself, forgot her indifference and worldliness, and cold, hard selfishness, and only realised with a crushing sense of unworthiness the great strength and the passionate devotion of the man she had promised to marry. She was nearer loving him than she ever had been or ever would be again; but the moment passed, and with it the only real impulse of tenderness she had ever felt. Mara was herself again!

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MISS LATIMER OF BRYANS.

BY ELEANOR C. PRICE.

Author of "Alexia," "Red Towers," "The Little One," etc.

CHAPTER XXIV. IN THE LANE.

ARTHUR NUGENT was not entirely without a conscience; but from a child he had lacked the power to turn away from anything that seemed pleasant, and now honour was not strong enough to hold him back from a flirtation with a pretty girl. Only a flirtation; he did not admit the thought of having embarked on

A great flood that whirls me to the sea.

He saw no harm in looks and words that Maggie, shocked, terrified, enchanted, might take in their fullest meaning. In his heart, too, in spite of all that Poppy was, of her generous soul and her beautiful old home, he considered himself a tricked and injured man, quite justified in taking any distraction he could find by the way. But, playing as he did with edged tools, he had no idea of destroying himself or anybody else. He would not, in fact, acknowledge to himself that the irresistible attraction which drew him to Maggie meant anything more than he had experienced twenty times before. That circumstances made this special flirtation specially awkward, specially dishonourable, was certainly unfortunate; but yet he thought of it as only a flirtation, more amusing, more exciting than usual, just because more dangerous. He did not yet know, or let himself know, that his feeling for this girl already deserved a stronger name, or that their first meeting in the wood had been, in fact, a crisis.

With the careless impulsiveness which

was part of his nature—generally so softened off by an idle gentleness and sweetness of temper, that only those who knew him well were aware of it—Arthur could not resist talking about Maggie to the Rector as they walked on, any more than he had resisted talking about her to Poppy in their drive, an hour or two before. He began pitying the girl for the desolate life she must lead with her old grandfather.

The Rector answered rather shortly that they were happy enough together.

Arthur then suggested that it was an awkward position for a girl like that, "pretty enough to be anybody." Perhaps Poppy's kindness had not been quite the wisest thing; because of course she must stick to the poor girl—she could not make her unhappy by throwing her over. It was awfully difficult.

The Rector was not at all inclined to discuss either Maggie's position or Poppy's wisdom with this young man, whose words reminded him unpleasantly of Mrs. Nugent's remarks about other young men, and her allusion to pretty housemaids. He observed more drily still that he saw no particular awkwardness in Miss Farrant's position, which was not such as to make her dependent on anybody. Porphyria's personal influence had been very good for her. No one would ever do a kindness if it was necessary to stop and think of all the far-off consequences.

"Poppy is rather worried about her, though," said Arthur. "She is afraid she may fancy herself neglected."

"Is she?" said Mr. Cantillon. "We must hope that Miss Farrant is capable of taking care of herself. Thank you, Captain Nugent. Here is the bridge. Now I will say good night, and I hope you will hurry back out of this damp air. Much obliged

for your kind escort—and—well, good night."

Arthur insisted on following him across the narrow bridge. "Miss Latimer won't be satisfied if I don't," he said lightly.

The Rector thanked him again, but said nothing more. The young man retreated across the bridge and the meadow as quickly as his best friends could have wished, while the Rector climbed the slope to his garden rather slowly and thoughtfully.

Maggie's tears, everybody's opinion, the absurd fact that even Porphyria's future husband chose already to interest himself in her friendships, in Bryans affairs—all this made a series of tiresome impressions on the Rector's mind. Yet he really did not know why Arthur's remarks had been so very disagreeable to him. "Good-naturedly meant, of course." And, after all, it had been nice of the young fellow to walk home with him. Still nicer of Fanny to suggest it. Dear Fanny!

Arthur walked back down the quiet road, seeing nobody, except some man, a good deal in advance of him, who went in at the back gates of the Court. He was a little nervous at passing under the high walls and barred windows of Church Corner; but all was silent and still. He turned down the green lane, passed the gate into the wood, and walked a few yards further, to the corner of the garden wall where she had disappeared, without seeing anything of Maggie. His first impression was that she had not waited for him, and he muttered an angry word. Coming close to the wall, he saw the rough steps which she and Poppy crossed so often. He was about to spring up them, to venture into the dark garden in search of her, when she came forward suddenly from the shadow of the poplars just below.

Arthur went up to her and took her hand, but she withdrew it instantly, and stood before him with her arms folded and her head erect, not at all like a creature that wanted pity.

"Captain Nugent, why did you ask me to wait for you here?"

Arthur was a little disconcerted, but not much. Somehow it struck him that this little pose and speech had been prepared while she waited.

"Are you angry with me?" he said very gently.

"Of course I am."

"But why? Was it so wrong? I wanted to ask you to tell me something,

and I never see you alone, so what was I to do? You don't mind, really? I have not offended you? It isn't late. We might have met accidentally, as we did in the wood that first day."

Maggie shook her head.

"What am I to tell you?" she said. "I must go in directly."

The tone of her voice was already a little softer. She was too much excited and frightened in those strange moments quite to know what she was doing; but she was also clever enough to hold her own to a certain extent. It would be absurd, she felt, as well as impossible, to turn away entirely and refuse to answer him, when she had already yielded so far as to wait for him in the lane.

"I am afraid somebody may pass," said Arthur. "Would the wood be safer—or are you afraid of the dark? I'm awfully fond of the wood, you know."

"Nobody will pass," said Maggie, standing still in the same attitude.

But a shiver passed over her from head to feet, and she bit her lips and clenched her fingers that he might not know it as he stood there looking at her. His silence was more trying than his words.

"Make haste, please," she said. "I must go."

"Don't be unkind," said Arthur. "Your grandfather thinks you are at the Court."

"Yes. I am deceiving him," the girl said. "And you——"

Arthur started a little at the sudden passion in her voice, which flashed out in those few words like a flame. Her meaning was not difficult to understand, but he could and did ignore it.

"I only want to ask you," he said, coming a step nearer, "why you look so unhappy? Do you know, you are awfully changed since I saw you first. When you met me that day in the wood I thought you were just as happy as you were beautiful. Whose fault is it? When a woman is like you—beautiful, lovely, sweet—she ought to have nothing to trouble her, ought she?"

Maggie could neither speak nor move. The sudden instinct of anger with him and herself had died down; even the excitement of that meeting had died down, and she only knew that she was, as he said, unhappy. But then it was such hopeless misery, so utterly beyond curing; and every word he said, every minute he stayed, only made it ten times worse.

"Oh, you forget," she murmured;

and she hardly knew that Arthur was holding her hand again.

"Is that my answer? No, I don't forget. If I did I shouldn't care, should I? Whose fault is it? Tell me, is it mine? Tell me! Dear, what is the use of pretending not to understand each other?"

"You are mistaken—I don't understand you," stammered Maggie.

"You can't look me in the face and say that."

"What do you mean? I have been rather low," she went on quickly, with a sort of nervous terror. "It was only because I felt lonely. Oh, I was very stupid! I wanted—but if you don't know I can't explain. What shall I do!"

"My dear child, don't I know? More than you do yourself, perhaps. Why am I unhappy too!"

"You are not unhappy! Oh, what shall I do!"

"I am though—miserable. You might be a little sorry for me, Maggie."

"What shall I do!" the girl murmured once again.

"Love me," Arthur whispered, so low that she only just heard it. She covered her face with her hands and began to sob.

Poor Maggie! It is pitiful when love comes into a girl's life in such a shape as this. She had had her dreams like other girls, and plenty of them. She had studied the subject a little in books, and far more in her own young imagination. Otherwise she knew nothing. The only young man who had ever come into her life at all intimately—Geoffrey Thorne, in the last few weeks—was too quiet, too matter-of-fact, too much wrapped up in his art, to be made a subject of romance. But since she met Arthur Nugent in the wood, and saw the admiration in his eyes, he had filled every thought of her foolish young mind. She listened for his footstep and the sound of his voice, and yet shrank from them; she would not meet his eyes, though knowing well enough how often they sought hers. The temporary loss of her friend gave her a good excuse for being unhappy; and here she deceived herself a little, as well as other people. Honestly, she would never have believed that she could be false to Poppy; but then she did not dream that Arthur was capable of it. In him it seemed sheer madness; in herself, wickedness beyond imagination. If this was love—this irresistible power that made her listen to Arthur, that made his presence feel like something necessary to life—then love,

indeed, was very far from being anything happy or beautiful. It was a strange mixture, in which the strongest feeling might almost be called agony.

For, till now, the deepest affection of which Maggie's nature was capable had been given to her friend. No one knew Poppy better than she did; no one had loved and honoured her more, though in a partly selfish fashion. In this, at the bottom of things, Maggie's treason was even deeper than Arthur's.

The sobs could not last long, for his arm stole round her to comfort her, and in the next few minutes she forgot past and future, forgot all duty, all danger, and all the impossibilities that hedged them both round. She did not even think of anything that was to follow on that foolish, passing time. It indeed was too short for words, almost for thoughts. Maggie lifted her head with a sudden start, and struggled back from the arm that was holding her.

"There's somebody coming through the wood."

Arthur let her go without a word; she sprang to the steps and vanished into the garden. Lingered a moment he heard nothing, and was inclined to distrust the girl's quick ears. Was it only an excuse the little gipsy had made to get away?

Then, to be sure, there was a rustling of leaves, and Arthur started off suddenly in a violent hurry, for he must not be caught standing here, and the lane ended just below. It would have been better for him to meet this person, whoever it might be, in the darkness of the wood. As it was, his hesitation brought him to the gate at the same moment that a man came up to it, touching his hat, from the other side. The moon was brighter now, and Captain Nugent was unmistakeable.

The man who met him was an under-keeper belonging to the Court, a smart young fellow, whom Arthur had already noticed once or twice.

"Good night, Stokes. Nice evening. Are you going home?" he said, as he passed through the gate.

"Yes, sir."

"Where do you live?"

"Sutton Bryans, sir."

"In one of Mr. Thorne's houses?"

"Yes, sir."

"Ah! well—nice evening. You have a longish walk. I have just been as far as the foot-bridge with Mr. Cantillon—not quite safe for him to cross at night by

himself. By-the-bye, don't you think that bridge is a little shaky?"

"I haven't noticed it, sir."

"I fancied it was, rather. Who has that field?"

"Mr. Ling, sir."

"What, the farmer at the other end of the village?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, Stokes, I must not keep you now. I suppose you know every inch of this country. I shall see more of you next week; my brother and some friends are coming down to shoot. Bird tells me there are plenty of pheasants."

"Mr. Bird's taken a lot of pains with them, sir."

"So have you, I expect. Are you married, Stokes?"

"Yes, sir."

"Any children?"

"Two little uns."

"Much trouble with poachers?"

Stokes grinned slightly at the transition, but it was of a piece with other oddities about the Captain that evening. He seemed to be talking in his sleep—sharp, and eager, and absent, all at once. Thus the friendly conversation with Stokes rather missed its mark. The keeper replied satisfactorily, however, and the young gentleman, wishing him another friendly good night, put a couple of half-crowns into his hand.

"One for each of the young ones," he said, and laughed.

Stokes thanked him and walked quickly away, not without one or two sharp glances in the direction from which he very well knew that Captain Nugent had come. He thought "something was up," without quite knowing what or why, and Arthur, by his foolish present, had only strengthened the impression. And to set brains working, in a country village, is the same thing as to set tongues wagging. Stokes thought about it all the way home, where he arrived with his hat much on one side, and his mouth twisted into a puzzled and rather distressed whistle.

On the next evening, about the same time, when the work of the day was done, Geoffrey Thorne sat quietly drawing at the table in the old living-room at his home. He had not hunted that day. His father and Frank had gone to Oxford, and were not yet in. Lucy and the dogs sat round the blazing fire, which glowed and flickered on the dark oak furniture and the heavy raftered roof of the old room.

Lucy was knitting. Sometimes she looked up sharply at her brother, and there was a sort of anxiety in these keen glances. Geoffrey looked tired and pale. He had accepted his fate with patience, and bore it well. There was no more resistance or rebellion; but he seemed to be settling down on a dead level of low, quiet spirits, without any of the brightness, the eagerness, the enthusiasm, which had belonged to him before. Lucy supposed she ought to be glad of the change, but it made her angry.

"They have made an old man of him among them all," she said to herself; and from this sweeping accusation she did not exclude the Rector. You may advise too much patience, too much self-forgetfulness, to a character like Geoffrey's.

Some new worry that evening had evidently attacked Lucy, and could be heard in the hurried click of her needles.

"Geoff," she said suddenly, "do you like Captain Nugent?"

"There isn't much to dislike," he answered after a moment, still stooping over his drawing.

"You think him a fool?"

"No. I didn't say so. Why should I?"

"Because I'm rather afraid he is one, and something worse too."

"What do you mean?"

"Well, listen to this."

Unchecked by his frequent exclamations of disbelief and scorn, she went on to tell him a singular story. It had all come through Annie Stokes, the young keeper's wife, who had been at the farm that day washing. It set forth how Jim Stokes, the evening before, had been followed along the village by Captain Nugent. The servants at the Court said that he had walked home with the Rector and Miss Farrant. Evidently, therefore, when Jim saw him first he was coming back from the Rector's house, and they had dropped Miss Farrant on their way. An hour later—it was not really so much—Jim had started home through the wood and had met Captain Nugent at the gate leading into the blind lane. He had come up the lane, not down it; and it ended in a mere field-path, a few yards below the corner steps that led into Mr. Farrant's garden. Where had the young gentleman been all that time? Jim thought him rather queer; he asked him a lot of questions in a hurry, as if he did not care for the answers, but wanted to show, as Jim expressed it, that he was "all there." Finally he gave him

five shillings, and hoped to see more of him next week.

"Five shillings is hardly enough to make a man hold his tongue," said Lucy with a sneer.

"But they must hold their tongues," Geoffrey said, staring at her.

"She is a silly girl," his sister went on. "I quite expected she would get into some scrape some day. The old man is right in wanting a steady husband for her. Everybody has noticed how Captain Nugent stares at her in church."

"But, Lucy, you must stop them. Not for her sake—don't you see?"

"Poor thing! Well—there's father, so we will say no more now," said Lucy.

JASMIN: THE BARBER, POET, AND EMINENT PHILANTHROPIST.

IN TWO PARTS. PART II.

To have an eye to business may appear somewhat prosaic; but poets rarely prosper by laziness of life. Jasmin was a genius; and having great capacity for taking pains, he won his laurels by sheer industry as well as natural gifts. Born with his mouth full of singing birds—"la bouco pleno d'auvelous" is the quaint old Gascon phrase—he yet might have lived idly, and scarce opened his lips to let his song escape. But while sticking to his shaving-dish, he worked also at his rhymes, and having planted a firm foot upon the first slope of Parnassus, he no more was driven to his garret when he felt a wish to commune with the Muse. Instead of seeking inspiration from the squeaking of the rats which haunted that top storey, he now might wander of an evening by the banks of the Garonne, and invoke the nightingale to help him in his songs; or—being master-barber now, and not merely 'prentice drudge—he might stroll in early morning to take a lesson from "God's poet," the skylark, blithely carolling and soaring there in sunny France, like as in fair Italy when Sordello sung.

Often, too, his wife would accompany his musings; for far from throwing his pens into the fire any more, she was able with her patois to assist him in his rhymes. O! peasant birth herself, she knew the Gascon language better than her husband; and as Molière would read his plays first to his housekeeper, to judge if they would please, so Jasmin first recited his fresh verse to Mariette.

We may fancy that Jasmin was not a little proud of finding a good listener in one who had at first turned a deaf ear to his Muse. Indeed, he showed a proper pride in her society, and when asked to parties, as a poet and reciter, would refuse all invitations where his wife was not included; which was more than many poets—Tom Moore, for instance, would have done.

A second volume of the "Curlpapers" appeared in '35, and was very favourably noticed by Sainte-Beuve in the "*Revue des deux Mondes*." In the same year, too, was published "*The Blind Girl of Castel-Cuillé*," a rather more ambitious poem, which Longfellow has translated into admirable English, though, of course, much of the flavour of the Gascon has escaped. This poem formed the first of Jasmin's public recitations, which grew speedily famous throughout the South of France. It was read by him at Bordeaux, on the twenty-sixth of August, in the same year, '35, in the presence of the Prefect, the Academy, and chief people of the place. Sainte-Beuve described it as "true poetry, rich from the same sources, gilded with the same imagery," as that of Theocritus and the ancient Greeks. The Bordeaux audience were loud in their applause of the reciter, who was entertained by the Archbishop and a score of other grand folks, and after ten days' feasting returned contentedly to his ryebread, and his razors, and his modest little shop. "To sing of joyous poverty one must be joyful and poor," he wrote to a rich merchant of Toulouse, who tempted him with "dreams of avarice," and of a fortune to be realised by a few years of Paris life; and he added serenely: "Is money the only thing for a man to seek who feels in his heart the least spark of poetry?" a question which some poets may possibly have found themselves reluctant to debate.

Just as Dante virtually created the Italian, so Jasmin put new life into the old Gascon language, which, but for his reviving efforts, might ere now have died out. His next poem, "*Franconnette*," a chivalrous romance in rhyme, whereof the hero was a blacksmith, was in the year '40 recited at Toulouse, before the Mayor and fifteen hundred of the chief folk of the city. The receipts were given wholly to the local charities, as had been done at Bordeaux by Jasmin's express wish; and the manuscript of the poem was presented to Toulouse. Grand feastings and orations

followed in due course. A crown of jasmynes and immortelles was presented at a special banquet of the barbers; and a golden laurel branch was given later by the city to the poet who had raised his voice to help their poor. This latter gift unhappily reached Jasmin on the day his mother died, and his joy at its reception was clouded by his sorrow at her loss.

In the year '42 the poet took his son Edward to Paris, and tramped about with boylike ardour for a week; seeing all the sights and writing of their wonders gaily to his wife. Then he called upon Sainte-Beuve, Charles Nodier, and Jules Janin, whose three heads seemed to form a very Cerberus of criticism; but who, instead of growling, received him with kind welcome for his Gascon Muse. Invited to recite, he appeared first at the house of M. Thierry, the distinguished blind historian, who had sacrificed his eyesight to his excess of study. Choosing, perhaps oddly, his "Blind Girl" for recitation, Jasmin purposely omitted a few mournful lines bewailing her sad lot. Being corrected by the careful memory of his host, he gave them with such pathos that the room was moved with tears; Thierry protesting that the poet must himself have suffered blindness, ere he could so vividly have described the agony it caused.

This reception within well-nigh the walls of the Academy, and recital in the presence of the chief writers in France, formed the prelude to Jasmin's triumphal march through Paris, where he daily won applause from fashionable lips. To culminate his glory, he was honoured by a mandate to pay a private visit to the Palace of Neuilly. There he was most cordially welcomed by the King, who won his guest's warm heart by a few old Gascon words. A banquet, too, was given by the perruquiers of Paris, where Jasmin spoke some verses he had written in their praise. It would seem that Gascony for centuries has been a country famed for barbers, and in Paris half the hairdressers are of Gascon birth. In old legends the barber nearly always is a Gascon.

After a month of sight-seeing and feasting, which must have stored his mind with memories for all his after life, the poet joyfully returned to his humble little home, and resumed his usual labour with his verses and his strop. The Muse aiding him, he

wrote a little poem, describing his late visit. Repressing manfully his vanity, he broke into no blatant blowing of his trumpet, but related simply his impressions and ideas, ending with the rather sensible reflection that "Paris makes me proud, but Agen makes me happy."

Though still working as a barber, Jasmin as a poet was now a famous man. His verses were translated into English, Italian, and Spanish; and in November '42 they were reviewed with no small favour in the "Athenæum," a journal which at that time was not given to high praise. The critic likened him to Rachel for his power of declamation, and declared that he was "an actor superior to any now in France." After a slight sketch—doubtless taken on the spot—of his humble little shop, and "smiling, dark-eyed wife," who proudly showed the presents and the laurels he had won, the writer thus describes the person of the poet, and his varied vocal powers:

"Jasmin is handsome in person, with eyes full of intelligence, of good features, a mobility of expression absolutely electrifying, a manly figure, and an agreeable address. His voice is harmony itself, and its changes have an effect seldom experienced on or off the stage. The melody attributed to Mrs. Jordan seems to approach it nearest."

Dr. Smiles suggests that probably the writer was Miss Costello, who, in another page of hers, describes thus a recital which the poet gave her at his house:

"He began in a rich soft voice, and as we advanced we found ourselves carried away by the spell of his enthusiasm. His eyes swam in tears; he became pale and red; he trembled; he recovered himself; his face was now joyous, now exulting, gay, jocose; in fact, he was twenty actors in one; he rang the changes from Rachel to Bouffé, and he finished by relieving us of our tears, and overwhelming us with astonishment. . . . He has handsome hands, which he uses with infinite effect; and on the whole he is the best actor of the kind I ever saw. I could quite understand what a Troubadour or jongleur might be; and I look upon Jasmin as a revived specimen of that extinct race."

The poet at this interview announced to his fair visitor, with pardonable pleasure, that the King had granted him a pension of a thousand francs. And when twitted with the current chatter about his vanity, Jasmin excused himself by frankly owning:

"Well, I am a child of Nature, and I cannot hide my feelings."

Another English journal, the "Westminster Review," was also loud in commendation of the "Curlpapers," crowning it by a comparison of Jasmin with Burns; though Dr. Smiles thinks Allan Ramsay a poet more in point. The reviewer does full justice to Jasmin's charm of pathos and sweet purity of thought; declaring that "he calls nothing unclean but vice and crime. He sees meanness in nothing but in the shame, the affectation, and the spangles of outward show. . . . All he seeks is the sterling and the real. He recognises the sparkle of the diamond as well as that of the dewdrop. But he will not look upon paste."

"My poetry comes from my heart," says Jasmin in a letter to M. Léonce de Lavergne; and from a heart so good, so tender, and so true, there never could come anything but tenderness and truth.

One other picture we must give of Jasmin the poet, ere sketching in a few lines Jasmin the philanthropist. There is a little book of travel now seldom to be seen, except perchance on an old bookstall, entitled "Claret and Olives," from the pen of Angus Reach, a well-known writer forty years ago. In this volume he tells of a trip Southward in the year 1852, and of how the fame of Jasmin was so sounded in his ears, that he went out of his way to beard the barber in his shop. Jasmin was discovered in the act of shaving a plump customer, and was found to be a "well-built and strongly limbed man of about fifty, with a large, massive head, and a broad pile of forehead overhanging two piercingly bright black eyes, and features which would be heavy were they allowed a moment's repose from the continual play of the facial muscles, sending a never-ending series of varying expressions across the dark, swarthy visage."

Invited to a chat, when his barber's work was done, the poet dashed at once "with the most clattering volubility and fiery speed of tongue, and with the most redundant energy of gesture," into a sort of rhapsody on poetry and patois, and the blessings of their union; declaring it to be as possible to write poems in arithmetic as in school-taught modern French. The language, he protested, had been "licked and kneaded, and tricked out, and plumed, and dandified, and scented, and minced, and ruled square, and chipped . . . and pranked out, and polished, and musca-

dined, until, for all honest purposes of true high poetry, it was mere unavallable and contemptible jargon." No, no, to write poetry, you must learn the language of the peasants, who sing as Nature teaches them, and who live in the bright sunshine among the birds and the sweet wild flowers, and not in stuffy schools of science, or in noisy city streets.

Rattling on in this way, and scarce pausing to take breath, he rushed about the shop, pulling out old piles of newspapers, and pointing out a phrase which chanced to hit his fancy, or rolling out a burst of Jovian thunder on the heads of genius-misconceiving, pigmy, whipper-snapper critics. One review especially, the "Tintinum" he called it, had given him great pleasure; and when the English writer owned that such a journal was unknown to him, "Pourtant," cried Jasmin joyously, "je vous le ferai voir"; and after hunting for his "Tintinum," in triumph he displayed the famous "Athenæum"!

In the year '48, when the Republic was established, Jasmin was asked to represent his native town in Parliament. An influential deputation waited on him formally, and found him, not indeed like Cincinnatus at the plough, but quite as peacefully employed in the task of shelling peas. Jasmin declined the proffered honour, and went on calmly with his work, confessing that he had a strong faith in a monarchy, but insisting that, to govern well the country, men should be pure and true. Visiting Paris shortly after, he declined the honour of a reception by the President, but being invited to Saint-Cloud in May, 1853, he recited with such pathos as to touch even the cold hearts of the Court. "Mais, poète, c'est un véritable scène de mouchoirs," said the Emperor, who possibly was less moved than his wife. And Jasmin then petitioned for the pardon of a lawyer friend of his, who had been exiled since the coup d'état, and whom the Emperor—his wife prompting him—recalled to France forthwith.

Among his other blushing honours, the barber-bard was given a gold medal by the French Academy, together with a prize of three thousand francs, to which two thousand more were added by distributing his poems to "the Forty" and their friends. He was likewise made Chevalier of the Legion of Honour, in company with Balzac and Alfred de Musset, the young Byron of France, who probably had never

read a line that Jasmin wrote. A few years later, as a mark of his self-sacrificing charity, he was made Chevalier of the Order of St. Gregory, this being the sole instance of a barber being chosen for such honour by a Pope.

Another proud day in his life was the twenty-third of July, 1843, the day of consecration of the new Church of Vergt in Périgord, rebuilt from funds which Jasmin, by six months of reciting—often twice or thrice a day—had well-nigh wholly earned. The ceremony was performed by the Archbishop of Rheims, attended by five bishops and some three hundred priests. Although Vergt was but a village, more than fifteen hundred people were gathered to the scene; and afterwards at table, when the appetites, both clerical and laic, were appeased, Jasmin recited a new poem composed for the occasion, called “*Lou Prêste sans Glèyzo*”—“*le prêtre sans église*”—descriptive of the noble influence of a Christian church.

But his proudest day of all was the sixth of February, 1854, when in the great *Salle des Illustres* at Toulouse, in the presence of the Archbishop, and the Prefect, and all those of the chief rank and beauty in the place, Jasmin was enrolled as *Maître-ès-Jeux* of the Academy of Toulouse. We can fancy that the Gascon poet valued this diploma above his other honours, more even than the crown of gold presented two years afterwards by his native townfolk. The title linked his name, through five long centuries of song, with the last of the old troubadours, whose language he had striven with such ardour to revive, but whom in his noble and unselfish charity he very far excelled. “*Largessee*” was a word familiar to the ears of those who listened to such minstrels, but Jasmin never echoed it, excepting for the poor, whose cause he never ceased to plead.

“*Qui trabaillo, Thion li baillo*,” is an old Gascon proverb, signifying, “God helps him who works.”

Jasmin worked hard all his life; and, kind as he was to others, he most thoroughly deserved his success. From the trials of his childhood he well knew the pinch of poverty; and, when well-to-do, he laboured to save others from the hardships he had felt. Prosperous alike with razoring and rhyming, he chiefly became famous by his powerful reciting; and every penny he thus earned was devoted

to the poor. First speaking for their benefit during the hard winter of 1837, for nearly thirty years he raised his voice in their behalf, and earned for charity no less than fifteen hundred thousand francs. From Bordeaux to Marseilles, from Lyons to Toulouse, scarce a town in Southern France but called on him for help; scarce an orphanage or hospital which he did not assist. To save the cost of carriage, wherever it was possible, he would walk from place to place, often leaving home for weeks in his pilgrimage of song. Poor girls met him on the road, and there strewed posies in his path; and fine ladies were so moved by the pathos of his tones that, at the close of a recital, they tore flowers from their hair and flung them at his feet.

In the fourth book of his “*Curlpapers*,” which was given to the world the year before his death, Jasmin notes that he spent only one hundred and forty-seven and a half francs—i.e., less than six pounds—during a circuit of some fifty days, wherein he gained for charity twenty thousand francs. Nor should it be forgotten that his journeys were mostly made in winter, when poverty pinched most; and when in rain, and storm, and snow he bravely tramped from town to town, heedless of his health. In truth it may be said, he laid his life down for the poor. The sudden chills, and changes from hot rooms to wintry streets, undermined by slow degrees his splendidly strong health. But, though suffering at times acutely and in great need of rest, he nobly struggled on for years, and would never flinch when called forth to some charitable work. Breaking down somewhat suddenly and unexpectedly at last, he gave his last recital—“the song of the stricken swan”—only a few months before his death.

This final recitation took place in '64 in the town of Villeneuve-sur-Lot; to which, although the way was rather long and the wind was doubtless cold—for it was in the month of January—and the minstrel was infirm, although not very old, he, nevertheless, determined as usual to walk. He was helped along the road by some of his kind friends; and, when he reached the theatre, he appeared well-nigh worn out. But after a short rest he sprang firmly to his feet, and never had his voice seemed more spirited and strong. For three long hours in that hot, crowded theatre he declaimed with all his might; and was so

utterly exhausted that he could hardly travel home. Nursed by his wife, he lay prostrate for a fortnight, and then feebly lingered till the fifth of October in the same year, when he died quite calmly, with his eyes fixed tenderly upon his dear Mariette.

On the eighth he was buried, the Perfect and others of chief note among the neighbours being bearers of his pall; and the last poem he had written being placed upon his breast. This was a piece composed during his illness, and was prompted by Renan's famous "*Vie de Jésus*," which had recently appeared. Jasmin called the poem "an act of faith," and declared that he was happy in thus ending his poetical career.

And, surely, if self-sacrifice be taken as a test, a purer, better Christian than this barber-poet it might be hard to meet. Long may his memory be green as the laurels which he won, and nobly stimulate to charity the hearts which it may reach! How much the world might be the better if there were more such gifted barbers in it, and such generous-minded men! Christians such as Jasmin, strong in faith and pure of life; unstinting in self-sacrifice and liberal in help; unselfish in their wishes and frugal in their wants—such men are not too common anywhere in these grasping, money-grubbing, and all-doubting days. Nor are there many countries where their presence is more needful than in socialistic, "*fin-de-siècle*" France. As Sainte-Beuve has declared, "*Si la France possédait dix poètes comme Jasmin, dix poètes de cette influence, elle n'aurait pas à craindre de révolutions.*"

MILITARY BANDS AND KNELLER HALL.

WHAT can more pleasantly ruffle the surface of life's dull stream than the music of a military band? It comes upon us, unexpectedly perhaps, with the muffled tramp of the battalion of redcoats, arresting for the moment the thronging crowd. Everybody falls into step with the music, and feels himself a soldier for the nonce. And it is the band that gives spirit to the march and life to the parade, that relieves the dull monotony of barrack or cantonment, and reconciles to the dust and mud of camps and bivouacs. The band, to quote the Queen's Regulations, is "essential to the credit and appearance of the regiment," and it is even something

more, as the hearth, as it were, about which, no matter where the clime, gather the soldiers of every rank with equal interest, the wives, the children of the regiment, even to its pet animals and favourite dogs.

It was always so, probably. "When Music, heavenly maid, was young," like other young maids she had a fancy for a soldier, and marched away, whether with the "hoplites" of the Athenian guards, or the smart legionaries of Rome. We may hear, too, the conches and war-horns of the barbarians summoning their heroes to battle, sounds that some of our own bandsmen may have heard among Ashantees or Zulus in these latter days. And if we owe our reeds, and flutes, and stringed instruments to peaceful shepherds and herdsmen, all those of sounding brass are clearly from the military side of the house, and may trace their pedigree to the infantry trumpet or the bent clarion of the Roman cavalry.

With us the military band seems to be coeval with the existence of the regular army. The Guards have had something in the way of a band from the first, though originally, perhaps, only fifes, bugles, horns, and drums. The Cameronians are said to have begun by singing hymns on the march, but the military spirit soon overpowered the religious. And curious enough were some of the old military instruments of music; old pipes, old zinks, flutes, and pommers, bass horns, serpents, and cormones, jingling johnnies, and bassoons. There would be a huge negro, perhaps, to clash the cymbals, and a whiskered pandour with the tambourine. But all this time the band was only an ornamental appendage to the regiment. It was supported entirely by the officers, and the bandsmen were performers who wore a military uniform, often fantastic enough, and often quite different from that of the regiment, according to the taste of the commanding officer. There is a story told of a newly-appointed Colonel, in the days of the old martinets, who expressed his dissatisfaction with the band as it marched past, because the trombones did not dress the slides of their instruments properly. One man would be half-way down while another was just starting. In vain it was represented to him that different instruments were of different compass, and required different manipulation. That was nothing to him; he must have uniformity in the ranks.

The old system produced some excellent bands, and was served by some excellent bandmasters, chiefly of German extraction. The Guards' band performed in Paris before the allied sovereigns in 1815, and two years before that date Charles Godfrey, whose name is inseparably connected with that famous band, had joined as bandsman from the Surrey Militia. Some pleasant passages in the life of a bandmaster of the old school are to be found in the pages of the "Bandman." Thus, the regiment not being in favour with the Scotch—owing to some old historic grudge, dating from the '45—the Colonel and the bandmaster put their heads together so that nothing but Scottish airs of the good old sort should be played when the regiment marched out in Scotland. The effect was magical; nothing had ever pleased the Scots half so much, and the only danger was of the demoralisation of the band by innumerable "haufs" of whiskey thrust upon them by their admirers. Some years after the regiment was ordered to Dublin. Colonel and bandmaster nodded their heads sagaciously. What was sauce for Sandy must also be good for Pat, and the bandmaster took out all his favourite Irish airs; but, better versed in music than politics, some debateable party tunes had glided into his repertory. Result—brickbats and shillelaghs, and a general riot in the city, and a hot memorandum from the Castle to wake up the commanding officer.

A pleasant story, too, is told of the Welsh Fusiliers, or rather of their favourite goat. The King's Own and the Fusiliers were quartered together at Winchester, and Billy had the run of the barracks, and would always fall in with the drum-major at the head of the regiment when it marched out. But sometimes when the King's Own marched out Billy would fall in with them. "But such was his knowledge of music," says the old bandmaster, "that if the band struck up a march that was never played by the Twenty-third, he would turn round and butt at the bandsmen, and then discovering his mistake, would march away disgusted."

It was in 1857 that the old order of things gave way, and from that time bandsmen were recruited as soldiers, enlisted on the same terms, and drilled like other soldiers till they are qualified to serve in the ranks, on any emergency. And dating from that period all appointments of bandmasters in the British army are made from those who have been trained at Kneller

Hall. At the present time regimental bands are recruited chiefly from schools and public institutions, where the boys have had some preliminary training in instrumental music. At the head of these are the Duke of York's School, Chelsea, and the Royal Hibernian Military School, Dublin, which are able to supply only a small portion of the demand; while District Schools, the "Exmouth" training ship, the Gordon Boys' Home, and institutions of the same character are applied to in their turn by the commanding officers of regiments which require band boys. These boys, enlisted from fourteen to sixteen years of age, may be put to bugling and drumming, but if they show any marked capacity for music, sooner or later they will find their way to Kneller Hall for a course of training and instruction.

The official establishment of a band for a battalion of infantry consists of a bandmaster, a sergeant, a corporal or lance-sergeant, twenty privates and eight boys—thirty-one in all. The cavalry bands are smaller still, twenty-three in all, and these numbers are certainly too small for effective orchestration. But in practice the band is reinforced by extra bandsmen, who are often old bandsmen who have joined the ranks in expectation of speedier promotion, and who play for the love of the thing, in addition to ordinary duty. The bandmaster has his pay as warrant officer of five shillings a day, with seventy pounds a year from the band funds, and his share of what the band earns by private engagements, which varies according to the station and the reputation of the band. The band sergeant and corporal generally receive in addition to their military pay a monthly allowance from the band fund, and the bandsmen something in addition to the soldier's daily shilling, while all share in the private earnings of the band according to their degree. The Government contributes to the band fund as much as pays the bandmaster's salary; and it also provides the brass instruments. The other expenses of the band fall upon the officers, and still form a substantial deduction from their pay.

The British bandsman's life is not that of a sybarite. He rises at six, and is ready to turn out neat and tidy if the band is required to attend morning drill at seven. At eight there is breakfast, at nine practice till ten, at ten full concerted practice till noon. Then comes dinner, and after dinner practice again for the young hands for a couple

of hours. Once or twice a week the band plays at the officers' mess, and on other nights it is to be hoped there are engagements, which the bandsman prepares for with alacrity, as they not only bring "kudos" to the band, but some small addition to the pay of the performer.

The most important epoch in the life of the young bandsman is his period of training at Kneller Hall. He arrives there a pupil, perhaps with some proficiency in some special instrument, but with a great deal to learn and perhaps a little to unlearn. He leaves at the end of a course of instruction lasting for about eighteen months, furnished with a certificate from the professor of his chosen instrument, setting forth the degree of proficiency he has attained. If he has made a good use of his time, and shown real musical aptitude, he bears with him a further testimonial to the effect that he has studied Elementary Harmony and acquired some knowledge of Military Musical Instrumentation, and this latter certificate, which conveys to the commanding officer of the regiment the good opinion of Kneller Hall, may open the way for him, with due diligence on his part, to an eventual return to Kneller Hall, after he has attained the rank of band sergeant, for further training with a view to his qualifying for a bandmastership.

Kneller Hall itself takes its name from Sir Godfrey Kneller, the great portrait-painter of the age before Sir Joshua Reynolds, whose villa occupied the site of the present building, its position being indicated by a poet of the period :

To Whitton's shades and Hounslow's airy Plain,
Thou, Kneller, tak'st thy summer flights in vain.

In vain, that is, because the great world follows him to his retreat and crowds in to have its portrait taken. And if you should happen to visit Kneller Hall on some fine Wednesday afternoon in summer, you might think that Kneller's time had come back again. For from all directions there is a general concentration towards Kneller Hall: carriages of local residents, visitors from the railway stations, villagers and townspeople, are moving towards the Hall, while from among the rich verdure which surrounds everything rise the martial strains of the great Kneller Hall Band. It is a public reception at which all are welcome, with a band of perhaps one hundred and fifty performers, selected from the most promising pupils, and conducted

in turn by the advanced students, the bandmasters of the future.

Close by is the village of Whitton, with its forge, and tavern, and rural dwellings where many of the married students find quarters. And then the Hall itself appears, in the midst of its spacious grounds, some fifty acres in all, with cricket and football ground, meadows, shrubberies, and a pretty piece of ornamental water, with islands and grassy banks tenanted by all kinds of waterfowl, contributed from almost every region where the British drum sounds the *revellée*. The Hall itself is of handsome, dignified aspect, in red brick, of the modified Italian style that found favour in the reign of James the First, with turrets and a good carved parapet of open stonework. The latter is of a friable sandstone which is already falling into decay, but it is such a pleasing feature of the facade that it will be a thousand pities if the Royal Engineers work their will on it, as is threatened, and block it up with bricks and cement.

Of the original building of Kneller's there is preserved a relic in the shape of the foundation stone inscribed with the artist's name, and the date of its being placed in position—1709, if memory serves—and there is also a stable of his time in the barrack-yard. The present building is of no earlier date than 1848, and was built as a training college for schoolmasters, with Dr. Temple, the present Bishop of London, for principal, but in 1857 was acquired by the War Office for its present purpose. It is conveniently supplied with class-rooms, but is in want of a large hall for concerted practice in inclement weather, where the full power of the band could be heard to advantage. Winding staircases of stone in the square brick turrets lead to the various floors of the Hall, and within, the long corridors and multitudinous doorways are replete with the cheerful bustle of coming and going, and the general movement of a large military establishment, all of which finds a focus in the Commandant's office. Here we shall find Colonel Shaw-Hellier, the Commandant—himself well known as a connoisseur in musical matters generally, and an especial authority in military music and musical instruments—and the Adjutant, Captain Mahony, busy with all the multifarious requirements of the administration of an establishment which combines the attributes of a garrison and a college, but able to spare half an hour to conduct

us through the various departments of the building, and to give us an outline of the general organisation.

First of all, the staff consists of Commandant and Adjutant, and a Director of Music, who has the control of the musical education of the students, and there are ten professors, each of whom takes one or more instruments, and who are nearly all eminent performers in their several lines. There are chaplains and schoolmasters, the latter for the advantage of the younger pupils who have not yet obtained their full educational certificates. The students have a capital mess, managed by their own committee, the cost of which per head does not exceed sevenpence a day, and the youngsters are liberally provided for at just half the cost to them—the free ration being, of course, added.

Work begins at nine o'clock in the morning, after, perhaps, bathing parades, running drill, or a march out, and lasts till six, with intervals for dinner and recreation. The evenings are devoted to voluntary study or practice with the string band, or to such diversions as may be in season. Saturday is, of course, a half-holiday, when cricket and football are in the ascendant. During the concert season in London the advanced students have the privilege of attending the best orchestral concerts, and every now and then the opera, so that they may be familiar with the best music of the day.

Already we have shown the youngsters en route for Kneller Hall, and now it remains to be seen how the aspirant for the position of bandmaster finds his way there. He must have had seven years' service as a musician and be a sergeant, or, at all events, a lance-sergeant, and then, under the recommendation of his commanding officer, he applies for admission to Kneller Hall. Upon that a set of sealed packets are forwarded to an officer appointed to superintend the examination, and the candidate "sits" accordingly at his own station, perhaps at Allahabad, perhaps at Aldershot, and discusses his packets from nine till noon on three successive days. The examination is stiff enough to plough a considerable number of candidates, but those who satisfy the examiners are directed to join the college.

Then comes a really arduous course of study in harmony, counterpoint, musical form, military and orchestral instrumentation, with a thorough training on all

instruments constituting a military and string band, on one at least of which he must be a skilled performer. In from two to three years the average student will have worked from class to class, will have obtained from each of the ten professors a certificate that he has sufficient knowledge of their respective instruments to be able to teach the same, and then with the goodwill of the Commandant and Director of Music, he sits again for a final examination by independent examiners selected from amongst the most eminent musicians in London, and if he passes, wins the "qualified form."

Once qualified, the student remains at Kneller Hall to await a vacancy on the roll of bandmasters, and occupies his time in further study, and in coaching the junior pupils, conducts the band in his turn during concerted practice, and scores or arranges instrumental music.

So far the student's energies have been quickened by the prospect of substantial advantages before him; but when he leaves Kneller Hall to take up the bandmastership of a regiment, he has reached the top of the tree, and there is only his interest in his art and professional zeal to keep him up to the mark. There is, however, a growing feeling in the profession that good service and proficiency should bring some reward, in the way of promotion and of higher relative rank. An accomplished musician and good bandmaster is surely qualified for commissioned rank; but with the exception of the bandmasters of two of the stationary bands—which comprise Guards, Artillery, Engineers, and Royal Marines—no such rank has been conferred on bandmasters, whatever their social and professional standing.

And now for a rapid glance at the internal features of the Hall. Here are class-rooms for the clarinet, for the horn and oboe; the euphonium and trombone make the windows tremble with their deep notes, to which the bassoon furnishes still a lower depth. Here is a lecture going on upon the theory of music, with current illustrations on the black-board; in another room the choir is practising for a coming festival. Urgent messages arrive from bandmasters who want performers, or from bands who want a conductor. Some are away to London for a rehearsal, others are returning; some, again, would be away on leave. With it all the music goes on, now in full force, again fining off to a single chord. There is a ruffle of drums,

perhaps, or again the clear notes of a cornet. But the students have a nice quiet room as library and study, where they may work, apart from the distractions of their own quarters; and the youngsters have a good recreation room where they can make a noise, play draughts or dominoes, or read in a corner a well-thumbed volume from the bookshelves.

Then there is the chapel, small, but handsome, with its organ loft and galleries filled on Sundays by a powerful choir. There is something like a musical service, you may imagine, where all are musicians, and a Sunday morning at Kneller Hall is an experience worth encountering; but there is not room for many besides the collegians.

There is the schoolroom, too, where some of the youngsters are going through the curriculum necessary to obtain a certificate, and where the black-board is full of posing questions in arithmetical subtleties. This schoolroom opens on the verandah that overlooks the lawn, where is the bandstand, solidly arranged for a hundred and fifty performers. Beyond that again are the red roofs of the new "married quarters"—for this is not a celibate college—where a dozen or so of the married students will find each a pleasant little home. At present the married ones have to get lodgings in the village, where the demand often exceeds the supply.

Looking at the value of the musical education given at Kneller Hall, it would seem that the career of a military musician offers considerable advantages to those with gifts and impulses of that nature. The bandmaster's position is a good one, and it rests with himself to make it equal in dignity to any other professional post, for an accomplished musician of polished manners is sure to take a high rank in social estimation, whatever his nominal army rank may be. At the end of twenty-one years' service, five of which must have been spent as bandmaster, when a comparatively young man, he may retire with a life pension of three-and-sixpence a day, and musical connections that ought to ensure him a good position as conductor of one of the numerous private bands or musical associations now so rife; and many retired bandmasters have attained a comfortable position as teachers and professors of music. There is a good deal of chance about the matter, perhaps, as far as regards the bandmaster's share of emoluments and distinc-

tion, and lean stations and fat ones fall to his lot irrespective of his talents and capacities. But it may be borne in mind that the career is safe if not brilliant, that it affords plenty of scope for talent and energy, and that good abilities will hardly go unrecognised—certainly not at Kneller Hall.

MERIVALE'S MASTERPIECE.

A COMPLETE STORY.

"Yes, and do you know, Farrell, you are about the last man I should ever have expected, at one time, to shew me such kindness, or give me such generous encouragement."

"Have I encouraged you? Ah, well, that only proves how little one really knows one's friends."

And Farrell, the man addressed by George Merivale, the owner of the studio in which they were chatting, smiled in answer to the other's almost affectionate address.

"That is so; for, oddly enough, before you came out so well and in your true colours, I had the idea, or impression, or whatever you please to call it, that you disliked me rather than not."

"Ah, you always were fanciful, you know."

"Oh, that is all over, long ago, or I never should have told you, or—but you know all that, don't you?"

"Then why trouble to explain? If you know anything about me at all, you must own that I am not such a—I mean, not nearly so impressionable or imaginative as you," and the smile grew more pronounced than ever as the speaker went on: "But then each to his line. So long as you can turn your fancies to such account," and he pointed to the easel, "I for one shall be the very last to condemn either you or them."

"On the contrary, you have done nothing but admire."

"Admire is hardly the word, it does not express it. I am only sorry I have never been able to half do your picture justice."

"You think it is—tolerable, then?" queried the painter eagerly.

"Most tolerable, and not to be—you see into what pitfalls a habit of quoting may lead one. What I meant to say was that it is a truly remarkable work."

And the critic screwed up his fist through which to examine it the better.

"And you know why I am so terribly anxious, don't you? But of course you do,

for am I not always telling you? When everything—the desire of one's whole life, one's success in one's career, and above all, in love—all hang upon a thing, one may be forgiven for wishing to have one's own doubtful judgement confirmed. As to my own opinion, I should never place too much reliance on that. I am always in extremes. Sometimes I feel quite hopeful, and that it is really as you say—striking and original. But then at other times I have my doubts. When I wake up and come to it fresh in the morning, I am troubled with misgivings—but there, as you say again, I am full of fancies."

"You are indeed."

"Yes, I have been working rather too hard, I believe. But it will soon be finished and sent in, and then—why, then I can rest."

"And what do the other fellows think—or rather, what do they say? For it is difficult to get to know the real opinions of some people, as I dare say you know."

"Oh, none of them have been to see it lately. That is one thing that has made me uneasy, and led me rather to—to doubt, you know."

And Merivale glanced wistfully at his questioner.

"Don't you think you rely too much on the opinions of others, and not enough on your own? You see that it is good—quite the most daring thing you have ever painted, I think you said. Then why not hold by that, and let the rest go?"

"So I do try; but when so much—everything—depends on it, one's own judgement is so often biassed and completely wrong."

"Candidly, Merivale, you are a— a queer fish. You are allowing this to have far too great an influence over you. Why, I do believe if anything were to happen—say that the picture were to turn out a— a mistake, a hopeless and ridiculous failure—I really believe—"

"Oh, hush, Farrell! don't suggest anything so horrible!"

"Well, my dear fellow, it was only a suggestion, caused by your own—but you are going a long way towards proving the truth of my words. You look quite white and ill. You really must take care."

"I cannot take anything until this weight is off my mind. And if it were to—to turn out as you suggest, I—I believe it would be the death of me outright." And throwing down his palette and brushes the painter paced hurriedly about

the room, while the other watched him narrowly through his half closed eyes, as he finished in still greater agitation:

"Thanks to you and your suggestion, I have risked everything on this."

"Nay, nay, Merivale, I protest. Don't throw all the weight on me. It is true when first you mentioned your idea for the competition to me I did say, 'Why not go in?' but I never meant it—seriously that is; while as to recommending you to throw up all your other work, and neglect all your commissions, I never should have ventured to advise anything so—"

"Mad—no, perhaps not. But I am in it now; have staked all on this one throw, and—you know you did admire the first sketch I showed you." This was said with a return of anxiety.

"I told you you had got hold of a wonderful idea—startling and original, I believe I said—and I have never seen any reason to change my opinion since; which was your own, if you remember, at the time. So why not rest satisfied with that? Stick by your first impressions and send it in. You will learn all about it, from the critics, then."

"Well, I will. I must believe; merely to doubt is too horrible! Besides, I have felt all through as though I were inspired. Except, that is, at these dreadful seasons of depression; which seize upon and shake me until I—but, as you say, I will trust to my first impressions and to—to you. You should know—while for the rest, no one has seen it for months, during which I have slaved at it early and late, and let everything else go."

"And Eurydice, Miss Earnshaw—"

"Has been away. She, too, has never seen it since the first outline. But to-day she is coming to give me one more sitting for the final touches, and—"

"You will let her see it?"

"You—you think she will be pleased?" urged the painter doubtfully.

"My dear fellow, she will be surprised; I feel confident of that. And now take my advice. You are worn out and terribly excited. Take a dose of chloral, or bromide, or whatever that stuff is the doctor gave you, and have a rest. You will be worth ever so much more when you awake."

"Do you think so?"

"And bear in mind what Sir Joshua, or one of those fellows, said—I forget where I read it now—about broadening your effects. It must be done for exhibi-

tion pictures. What do you think of that carmine—is it deep enough, do you consider? The eyes, too—would not a trifle of depth—above all the smile—it must be no mere dimple, or curl of the lip; but, of course, you will see and decide all that for yourself, I dare say; I may be quite wrong."

"No, you are right, as you always are; I can see it now. I will just go over it again, and then, after an hour or so's work, lie down. I shall look and feel less tired when Mabel comes to see me this afternoon."

"Well, I'll be off and leave you to it. Who the deuce—— Oh! here's that fellow Eversleigh coming. He will not care about seeing me, we were never the best of friends. But I thought he was away—abroad."

"So he was; the wonder is to see him now. Back just in time, too; I am pleased. I was afraid it would all have been over before; but now, next to Mabel there is no one I——"

"Do you mean you are going to show him—this?"

"Why not? He is my very oldest, closest friend."

"Oh! please yourself of course. Only, were I you—after the way some of your other friends have behaved, and all that——"

"But Eversleigh is——"

"Candour itself, no doubt. Still, I would learn first whether he is going in himself. One never knows. Time enough to show him—if you must—after that."

"You—you think so?"

"I'm sure so. In some things you really are little better than a child. Don't you see it for yourself?"

"Well, perhaps you are right; though I should as soon have thought of doubting—but maybe you are right."

And with that, after repeating: "Why, of course, it's only common-sense. It is far too late to profit by any suggestion he might make, so you just keep the curtain down. He'll see it on view, and—but I must be off. I don't wish to meet him here," Farrell had gone hurriedly away.

Hardly had he got clear of the side door, than Eversleigh, the "oldest, closest friend," came in at the front, and after the first awkwardness of "welcoming the coming," with the warning words of the "parting" guest still sounding in his ears, Merivale gradually thawed and relapsed into the old intimate relations. While

Eversleigh, after one quick glance at his friend's face, and then at the signs of disorder and neglect about the studio, began to talk:

"Well, and what have you been doing all this long time? Too busy to write, eh?"

"Yes, too busy, and too—shall I say absorbed? Both, I think," laughed the other nervously, with a trace of the awkwardness of doubt still lingering about him.

"You seem a trifle 'fey' even now. How, or what, is it?—if that is a fair question."

"Why, you must know, or, rather, you do know, that I am very much in love."

"Quite so; so much you did send me word. And how fares the tender passion?"

"In some respects well, nothing could be better, but——"

"Oh! there are buts."

"That goes without saying, does it not?" and again the laugh sounded nervous and constrained before he finished. "It is part of the usual probation, and of—the whole story, in short."

"Well, fire away—unless, by the way, I am not to hear it," returned Eversleigh with another swift and keenly observant glance.

"Oh! you shall hear all there is to tell. Of course you know all about the great competition?"

"Certainly; though I don't quite see——"

"Possibly not, but you will when you hear that I am sending in."

Eversleigh's face changed a little, in spite of himself, as he answered:

"What, you, a landscape man, go in for——"

"Oh, I knew what you would say, but I—I—call me a fool if you will; but it was borne in upon me that—in short, I had what I thought was an inspiration by way of an idea."

"But the subject, for you, don't you think, is insuperably difficult? You know I always advised you to——"

"Stick to what you thought my line. I know, and possibly I should have done so but for——"

He hesitated, while his friend interposed anxiously, but with an encouraging smile: "Well?"

"But for my idea. Say that I was infatuated, possessed, or what you will."

"I can't say that until I have seen the idea."

"But I mean thoroughly possessed with the subject and the desire to work it out."

"Oh, there is no particular harm in that, always providing——"

"It is no use, Eversleigh. I may have been a fool. I hardly know yet; but I have staked all upon this one throw—have given up everything else for it—all my commissions and my other work. Not only that, Mabel agreed to sit for the principal figure, and I think that her doing so inspired me; while work—oh, how I have worked, and what agonies of alternate desire and despondency I have endured! As an artist, you may have some idea, and, anyhow, you are the only one I can tell, except—yes, of course—except Farrell."

"Farrell; what of him? I always did detest that man." This came quickly. "And——"

"That is because you do not know him," objected the other.

"Say rather because I do. But what of him? What could he have to say or do in the affair? I thought——"

"That we were rivals. So we were, until he showed himself my friend. I don't know why we should have both so misjudged him; but from the very hour that Mabel assured him he had no chance, he changed, and although he has never made any open professions of goodwill, I suppose he yielded to the inevitable, for he gave up all that sneering way he had, and he has stood by and encouraged me when all the others fell away. In fact, but for him, I never should have gone in, much less stuck to it, as I have done."

"And the others fell away. What, Darcy and Redmond, and——"

"All of them, to a man. Of late they have left me altogether alone."

"And for what reason?"

"None that I have ever heard. Farrell says they must be jealous, but that you know I can't believe. It is making too much of one's self altogether to think that."

"No, I would not even think it without——" Eversleigh stopped awkwardly. "And so Farrell thinks your idea good, eh?" he enquired next.

"He has nothing but praise for it. It is both striking and original. I am quoting his own words, and——"

"He should know, if any one does. He will never paint anything worth talking about, because he won't work; but to give him his due, he is a fair critic—though how on earth——"

"You may well be surprised. I wonder at myself sometimes."

"My dear fellow, it is not your talent, or invention, that I doubt, but merely your technical skill. Suppose you show me this masterpiece of yours," and he laid his hand on the curtain which was drawn jealously before the easel.

"Not yet—not just yet, Eversleigh. You see, Mabel is coming this afternoon, and I—the fact is, she must be the first to see it."

"Except Farrell," interposed his friend with a very pardonable heat, a natural jealousy that was quickly lost in sincere pity as he noticed his friend's wasted features and nervous, unsteady eye. "So, then," he asked, "Mabel has not yet seen it?"

"Not yet. To-day it is to be shown to her for the first time."

"And what else have you been doing?"

"I told you I gave up everything for this."

"But your commissions, what of them? Surely—was that wise?"

"I cannot tell. Looking back, I have my doubts. Truly, Eversleigh, for the last twelve months I seem to have been in one long troubled dream. I only hope I shall not wake to find——" he broke off with a sudden gasp and an involuntary shudder.

"Well, well, we must hope for the best—though I wish I had been here," Eversleigh murmured to himself, "before he wasted a twelvemonth of valuable time, just, too, at the outset of his career, when he was doing so well and getting known. Unless, indeed, he is right after all, and the love fever has brought him the touch of genius that makes up for the rest. One has heard of such things, whether fever, or madness—and he is feverish enough, goodness knows! The wonder is he has not broken down long ago. You had better lie down and have a sleep as you agreed," he went on aloud; "I have one or two calls to make, and will come back in a couple of hours and see both the picture and its fair inspirer."

"All right, do so, for I really am tired; I hardly know what has come over me of late. Such a strange languor, and—but I will have a dose of chloral, as Farrell suggested."

"Oh! Farrell suggested that too, did he?" murmured Eversleigh, then aloud: "Look here, Merivale, you take my advice. You lie down and rest, and sleep if you can, but

without any of those infernal brain-disturbing drugs, I——"

"There, there, don't excite yourself. It's quite harmless, I assure you. I could not have kept up without; but there, since you make a point of it, I will try to do without. I shall be all the fresher to meet Mabel if only I can sleep."

They parted, Merivale to go to bed, where, after tossing about for a while, he sank into a heavy slumber; and Eversleigh, full of anxiety for his friend, to walk about the park and think matters over.

Two hours later he returned to the studio in a more hopeful frame of mind. True, Merivale was worn out and unnaturally excited, but overwork would account for that; while, as for his own doubts, he found they rested for the most part on his dislike and distrust of Farrell, and his disbelief in the goodness and singleness of his motives. What they could be he was unable to fathom, but certainly it was a sudden and, for him, most marvellous change from unsuccessful rival to confidential friend and adviser, and the situation required an unsuspicious mind such as Merivale's entirely to accept. Still, Merivale had had opportunities of judging that he, Eversleigh, had not, and he must hope for the best.

And full of curiosity he brushed past a lady, who, with bent head and down-dropped veil, hurried by him as he neared the door.

"Miss Earnshaw, I wanted so much to——" he began; but she was gone, and either had not heard or would not hear him, and there was nothing for it but to ring the bell.

Some little time elapsed before it was answered, and when he was shown into the studio he was alarmed more even than before by Merivale's wild and distracted air. He was standing reading a note, and his staring eyes and white face spoke of some terribly strong emotion.

"Oh, thank Heaven you are here, to tell me whether I am awake and sane or still dreaming," he exclaimed violently, then sank into a chair as he went on. "Oh, I have had the most horrible dream, and a still more horrible awakening. What can it all mean? It is cruel, heartless, to leave me without a word of explanation, nothing but this," and he dashed the note he was still holding down. "Yes, read it, by all means, for I can make nothing of it."

And thus bidden Eversleigh read—only a very few words, but they left him more

troubled than ever. This is what he read:

"If that is how I look in your eyes, the less we see of each other for the future the better."

That was all; no signature, no regrets, no farewell. But, of course, it was from Mabel; he recognised the hand, and puzzled as he was, he was about to test his first idea when his friend's voice arrested him.

"No, not yet," he urged hoarsely; "don't go to it—yet. Wait, wait while I tell you my dream. Instead of the bright creation of my fancy that for months past has gladdened my eyes and grown underneath my hand, I dreamt I stood before the picture and saw——" a groan broke from him, and he shook as with an ague, while he tried vainly to go on. "Oh, I can see it still. It is here—here!" he repeated wildly, as he struck his forehead violently with his open hand. "A painted, grinning horror, with eyes—oh, Heaven, what eyes! And this was the thing I had loved and had bound myself to for life. And, at the sight, all my love was lost in loathing, and, in the awfulness of the reaction, I awoke—woke to find—this;" and he struck the open note with his foot where it lay. "And, oh, the nightmare horror of it! I could see the likeness through it all, as though Mabel, transformed into a veritable fiend, were mocking me. And now, Frank, look—look at what I have done yourself. I dare not trust my eyes, not though they were to show me Mabel's very self, while to face that jeering mockery again, I think, would shrivel up my brain."

Eversleigh hesitated for a moment; but what could he say? So, going to the curtain, he drew it quietly aside to straightway stand amazed.

For at the first glance he saw that something was seriously wrong. Whether brain, or eyes, or both, had been affected by the excitement and the long-continued strain, was not to be decided off-hand, but he realised, as with a lightning flash, the full refinement and ingenuity of Farrell's cruel scheme, and how he had turned the very truth itself to his own unworthy ends. For, stripped of its surface faults—and he, an artist, could see the true grandeur and simplicity of his friend's conception—it was, indeed, as Farrell had said "striking, daring, and original." Oh! what could he not have made of it himself? came the involuntary thought; while with it came also the full perception of where the pic-

ture failed—though failed was hardly the word, for the whole working out was so utterly wrong in colour, and, above all, in expression, that the thing stood forth more as a magnificent caricature than a serious work of art. And there, as he felt, would lie the sting. It could not well be overlooked, or fall of making a sensation, if only from its frightfully ingenious perversion.

For a moment he was in doubt. Could Merivale have meant it as an ill-timed jest, an attempt to turn the whole competition into ridicule? But no; he had only to remember the very real trouble of his friend's looks and words to dismiss that idea at once, and wonder what on earth he was to say. To tell him the truth, or, at any rate, the whole of it, in his present critical state, would, to say the least, be assuming a very serious responsibility, while to appear to side with Farrell and deceive the unfortunate painter still further might in the end prove still more disastrous. There was no help for it. He must temporise, at all hazards.

"Well," enquired the artist anxiously, "What is it like?"

"My dear fellow, I see clearly how it is. You have run the mill too long. You have strained both eyes and brain until now you cannot look at your own work without—fancying—distortion. Take my advice, and rest. Rest and change, fresh air and exercise, are what you need and must have, unless you wish to end your days at Colney Hatch. Try my prescription. Go away, say for a week, and then if you like to come to it again, why, I for one will not prevent you. Come, what do you say?"

"But the time, Eversleigh, the time. How can I afford the time? You see the sacrifices I have made, and how everything—reputation, nay, come to that, after twelve months, even bread and butter—depends upon my making a reasonable show; while how I am to be reconciled to Mabel, when I have no idea of my crime—Oh, everything is going wrong at once!"

Whereupon the miserable artist groaned and turned so white, that Eversleigh promptly rang the bell and sent for the nearest doctor.

Mabel meanwhile had left the house in ignorance of her lover's state, but in fully as much trouble as himself.

Shown into the studio when she called, and left to herself, being duly authorised on that day to satisfy her curiosity, she

had taken the opportunity to have a "quiet peep" at the expected masterpiece, and could scarcely credit the evidence of her own eyes. Still, there it was—a loud, staring, over-coloured, fatuously smiling horror—her lover's version of herself, and as such soon to be given to the world. Oh, it was too dreadful to contemplate calmly! While as to seeing him, the perpetrator of this outrage, this deliberately planned and carefully executed insult, which was so motiveless, unless it were intended to hold her up to the ridicule of all her friends—why, she felt she could never care to see him again. And, full of righteous wrath, she had written her farewell note, and left the studio fully intending never to return.

It so happened, however, that Farrell, bent on mischief, was on the watch for her appearance. Not so easily avoided as Eversleigh, he ignored her too evident annoyance, and persisted in walking her way; at last:

"Is anything the matter, Miss Earnshaw? You seem annoyed," he asked.

"If I said I am annoyed, and with you, Mr. Farrell, would it make any difference—to you, I mean?" she rejoined with marked displeasure, for her previous hints had been unmistakeably disregarded.

"Annoyed, and with me?" he repeated, somewhat startled in his turn; for that she should so promptly have found out his share in the transaction was hardly what he had expected.

"Yes, can you not see that I wish to be alone?" she returned coldly.

"Oh! yes, that is all right," he assented easily, for now he knew on what ground he stood; while she, thoroughly provoked, looked at him in undisguised astonishment.

"Then do you no longer pretend to be a gentleman?" she flashed back with a cutting contempt that made him wince in spite of his secret consciousness of the full success of his revenge.

"Ah! you are indeed annoyed; but not, I think, with me." And, mistakenly, he went on to take advantage of what he thought the opening. "You have seen Merivale's masterpiece at last; what do you think of it?"

"What I think cannot possibly concern—you," she replied coldly. "And if you will allow me, I will get into a cab."

"I should have thought——" then growing desperate as she deliberately turned her back: "Can't you see," he added, "that he

is going mad?" thereby throwing a new light upon the subject, and startling her very much indeed.

"Mad?" she echoed, for the suggestion, dreadful though it was, accounted for so many things.

"Why, would any sane man have so perverted—that?"

They were standing opposite a shop window, and he pointed to where a mirror gave back Mabel's full-length reflection in striking contrast to the counterfeit presentment she had just left.

Evidently she was moved by the suggestion, thought he, though he had not meant to say anything so near the truth; however, he must follow it up.

"Either that or he drinks, or takes some drug. What it is I can't quite make out, but nothing short of that would explain——"

But he had lost his head and gone too far. Mabel heard the lurking malice latent in his tone. She remembered what had passed and all that Merivale had told her of the supposed advice and encouragement given him by his friend, and with a woman's ready intuition she felt there was something wrong, and that the man before her was in some unexplained way the cause. So, without a word or sign, she stepped into the waiting cab—to bid the man drive her back to the studio as soon as they were fairly out of sight.

And fortunate it was for her and her lover both that she did so.

When she arrived the doctor had put Merivale to bed, where, with head shaved and plenty of ice he hoped to stave off the threatened brain fever. He must be kept quiet and see no one, nor be disturbed for any consideration whatsoever.

Such was Eversleigh's news when they met in the deserted studio, where all uncovered and unregarded stood the fatal masterpiece, the cause of all their present woes. Eversleigh, having finished his explanation, caught sight of it presently, and wishing to spare Mabel the sight, went once more to draw the curtain.

"No, let me look at it again," she urged. "I can bear it now that I know he is not in any way to blame." Then, as she began to piece the threads together, she exclaimed: "Oh, what an infamous plot! It is all his doing."

"You mean Farrell's? Yes, I have come to the same conclusion. Seeing the pitiable state to which overwork and anxiety had reduced him, he has worked upon Merivale and spurred him on by his artful

suggestions until—this is the result. A noble idea spoiled."

"A noble idea! Why, do you mean that it is good?" cried Mabel in amazement; for she had not seen below the surface even yet.

"It is a magnificent subject, and if it were properly treated—— Oh, that I had had the chance to paint it!"

"Then why not do it?" And Mabel spoke as one inspired, her ignorance of petty details giving her the necessary courage; and as the artist looked back at her in surprise: "George is not to blame; you see that, now, do you not? He is a victim to over-anxiety and—his friend. I don't know how you feel, but I would do anything to see the schemer foiled. What do you say? Suppose I sit again and——"

"By Jove! Miss Earnshaw, you have hit on a really great idea. I must confess I never dreamt of that. There is nothing I should like better; here is all the material ready to our hands. If you will give the time, a very little trouble would effect a revolution; and I should dearly like to turn the laugh against that scoundrel Farrell. What do you say, then? If you are ready, so am I."

And straightway was the bargain struck, and while Merivale, carefully nursed, lay ill in bed, under the skilful touches of his friend his picture was rapidly transformed into all he had ever dreamed of it, and more. And it was one of the finest sights they had ever enjoyed, when Eversleigh and Mabel together confronted the arch plotter Farrell and saw his discomfiture before the winner of the Great National Competition. While for the poor victim, no sooner was he able to hear that and the other good news—that their estrangement had been all a mistake—from Mabel, than he quickly got well enough to hear the rest and learn how it had all been brought about.

MARA.

A STORY IN EIGHT CHAPTERS.

CHAPTER III.

EIGHT months had gone by, and Mara declared laughingly that she and Desmond were quite old married people, for their marriage had taken place after only a month's engagement. Perhaps for both of

them those months had been the happiest in their lives. Desmond's days had passed in one long dream of bliss, for Mara was very loving to him in that early time of their marriage. She, too, was happy, with the pleased, gratified happiness of a selfish person who has attained the object of desire, and is perfectly satisfied with the world in general, and while the satisfaction lasted, how could she help showing her best and most charming side to the husband through whom she had gained her enjoyment?

And, besides, at first she was very proud of him; his talents, the honour and respect that men paid him, all gratified her vanity as she thought that he had chosen her from all other women to be his wife.

He had taken her home to Longford, and there, for a time, Mara was charmed with everything, most of all, perhaps, with the position she found awaiting her, for Desmond was one of the chief men in the place, and his beautiful wife was universally petted and made much of. Then, too, the freedom from money worries was utterly new and delightful; in all her life before, Mara had never known how to get even a new dress without scheming and manœuvring for it, while now Desmond's chief delight seemed to be in showering presents of all sorts upon her.

But all things were apt to pall on Mara after a time, and she began to weary for some change. She was one of those people whose test for everything and every one is novelty; when that has worn off, the value soon follows suit. She had no belief whatever in "that sweet monotony where everything is known and loved because it is known." Even Desmond's passionate devotion began to tire her, and the task of responding to it and keeping up the pretence of love, grew difficult.

She was thinking more discontentedly than usual one night, longing more than ever for some break in the monotony. Desmond had been obliged to go some distance on business at a far-off police station, and Mara, as she often did, had accompanied him. At first, these expeditions had delighted her—the long ride; the arrival at the little village, where all the inhabitants turned out to stare at them; the clean, white-washed barrack-room, where she waited while Desmond did his business; the ride home, generally at night when the moonlight threw ghostly shadows on the trees and hedges, till Mara

edged fearfully nearer her husband, visions of masked men and moonlighters coming to her mind; all had seemed like some weird fairy-tale. But even that she had grown used to, and she was only wishing, as she sat before the fire, that Desmond would be quick and not make them so late as usual. Why need he always want her to come with him, and take it for granted that she liked his company as well as he did hers?

A step echoed outside, and Mara jumped up hastily. But it was not Desmond who came into the room, shielding his eyes from the light, having only just entered from the dark outside. It was a much younger man, tall and fair, and, as Mara instantly decided, even better-looking than Desmond.

He took off his cap as his eyes grew accustomed to the light, and he saw that the room was not empty.

"I beg your pardon, I had no idea that any one was here."

"Pray don't apologise," said Mara. "I shall not be here long, I hope; I am only waiting for my husband."

"Oh," said the stranger, "then will you allow me to wait here? The girth of my saddle broke, and I came here to see if they could patch it up. I am going on to Longford."

"Are you?" cried Mara, wondering who he could be. "We live in Longford, too."

"Then we must be neighbours. Will you let me introduce myself to you? My name is Frank Warden."

"You are the gentleman who owns that big house just outside the town—I forget its name—are you not? My husband told me that a Mr. Warden used to live there, but he had been away for a long time."

"Yes, I have been away for a long time now: eighteen months it must be. To tell the truth I am not very fond of Ireland. But won't you tell me to whom I have the pleasure of speaking?"

"I am Mrs. Blake. I am sure you and my husband know each other."

"Yes, I know him very well; but—excuse me, I was not aware he had married," added Warden, as he looked admiringly at the beautiful woman before him.

Mara laughed.

"I dare say you have not heard it. We were only married a few months ago. Here he is."

The door opened and Desmond entered.

"I've been an awful time, darling, but—Hullo! why, Warden! I hardly

knew you. How on earth did you turn up here?"

"I dropped in on my way home," said Warden, shaking hands cordially. "Neither did I expect to meet you here."

"I dare say you and my wife have introduced each other," went on Desmond. "You see I've turned Benedick since we met last," with a proud look towards his wife.

"With such an excuse we would all follow your example to-morrow," said Warden, smiling. "Have you got over your business here?"

Desmond's face clouded.

"No, hang it all! That's what I came to tell you, Mara. I'm awfully sorry, but I must go out again at once; there's a row of some kind a few miles off, so they have just brought me word. I can't possibly be back before morning. I am vexed about it, dear," he added in a low voice, while Warden turned away. "I don't know what to do with you. You couldn't stay here for the night, could you? The sergeant's wife would fix you up all right."

"Oh, Desmond, I really couldn't! Just think how uncomfortable it would be. Can't I come with you?"

"My darling, no! There may be rough work—most probably will—and I must be in the thick of it. What could you do? No; won't you stay here?"

Mara pouted. "You know I don't want to, Desmond. Why did you want me to come if you knew you would have to go off like this? It was unkind!"

"But I never had any idea of it!" protested poor Desmond. "It really isn't my fault, Mara."

"Can I be of any use?" asked Warden, suddenly. "Excuse me for interfering, Blake, but as you are wanted, perhaps I could escort Mrs. Blake home."

"The very thing!" cried Desmond, much relieved. "Will you do that, Mara? If Warden will be so good as to see you safe home, that will be all right."

"Thank you very much, Mr. Warden," said Mara. "That will do capitally, Desmond. Are the horses ready?"

"I'll go and see," and Warden left the room.

Desmond turned to her when they were alone, and began to fasten up the short cloak she wore over her habit at night.

"Don't be angry with me, darling. I am awfully sorry I can't go with you. I couldn't possibly foresee having to go off like this."

Mara smiled up at him in her brightest way. "You old goose," she whispered. "When am I ever angry with you? I know that you would much rather come with me than go anywhere else."

He held her closely in his arms, and kissed her passionately. "I would rather die with you than live without you."

"Silly boy! No one wants you to do either; you have only got to live with me. And now let me go, dear; I am sure the horses must be waiting. Good-bye!"

And in a few minutes she was trotting steadily along the silent road, with Warden's fine chestnut keeping pace with her.

"Do you often come with your husband like this?" asked he presently.

"Very often, nearly always. He always wants to drag me about with him everywhere."

"Don't you like these moonlight expeditions, then?"

"Well, I suppose I am tired of them," confessed she frankly. "I used to think them great fun at first, but I am used to them now."

"Then you never like anything you are used to?"

"Not very often," said Mara, laughing. "You think that very shocking, I am sure."

"No, indeed, I don't," protested Warden. "On the contrary, I quite agree with you. I don't like getting used to things myself."

"Are you going to make a long stay here?"

"Well, I didn't intend to. I only came really to look up my agent, who isn't doing as well as he might."

"You don't like Longford, I suppose, as you spend so little time here?"

"Not very much. I generally find it slow after a time, and am pretty glad to get off to London or the Continent."

Mara listened, envying him his powers of getting away to London and the Continent. She knew that he was very rich, this young man. Desmond had often told her stories of his various extravagances both at home and abroad, but he always ended up with: "Lucky young dog! He can afford to sow plenty of wild oats with such a fortune as he's got." She had often been interested in him, and it was no wonder that now she hailed this fresh acquaintance as a welcome change, and during their long ride made herself as pleasant as she knew how to be.

"Are we really at the end of our ride?" cried Warden regretfully, as Mara checked her horse at the gates of her home. "It has been only too short, Mrs. Blake."

"We have not come very quickly either," said Mara. "I am afraid this really is the end, Mr. Warden. I will say good night, and many thanks. But for you, I should now be dismally awaiting Desmond in that horrid little barrack-room."

"The thanks are due from me," said Warden, as he unfastened the gates to let her pass through. "May I come to see you soon, then?"

"Yes, if you like. But you said you would not stay here long."

He laughed merrily.

"Oh, I don't know about that. Anyhow, I shall come soon."

Mara gave her horse into the hands of the sleepy groom, and went upstairs to her room. She looked at herself in the glass, and smiled with gratified vanity.

"H'm! I don't fancy, after all, he will go away very soon. And he is awfully good-looking."

She was right! Warden did not go away as he had meant to do. Before a month had passed he was at Mara's feet, the slave of her smallest caprice—at one moment teased and mocked at, the next cajoled and petted, and again treated with an airy indifference that well-nigh drove him wild. He loathed his slavery even when he most felt the charm of it; he hated the deceit it involved; at times the touch of Desmond's hand and the sound of his voice were almost more than he could bear; but yet her power over him was so great that he could not leave her. How he had begun to love her, when the first friendship and admiration began to merge into something different, he could not have told. He had never told her of his love—she had never allowed him to do so—but all the same he knew well that she was aware of it, and that though she did not encourage, she permitted it.

CHAPTER IV.

"MARA, I've some news for you," said Blake, coming suddenly into the drawing-room one morning, where his wife was standing in her riding-habit. She was waiting for Warden; it was an almost daily occurrence for them to ride together.

"What is it?" she asked listlessly. "Really news, Desmond? Is it interesting?"

"I find it somewhat interesting; I don't know whether you will. Do you remember that murder case I told you of not long ago, that took place down in Kerry?"

"No, I'm not very sure. Oh, yes, I do! The murder of an old man and his two sons. Is it found out?"

"No, the dolts have blundered again, as they invariably do!" cried Desmond, pacing the room excitedly. "I told them all along they were trying the wrong tack. And now, when they have got affairs into a most inextricable state of confusion, and given the fellows who did it ample time to make off, or at least to obliterate every trace of their guilt, they propose to resign the case to me! Why, if they give me a case, they can't let me manage it my own way from the beginning, I can't imagine! The local men always fail in any complicated case, and they always blunder and fool about and make things fifty times harder for me when I take matters in hand."

"Shall you go?" asked Mara, not feeling called upon to respond to this tirade.

Desmond stopped in his pacing opposite to her, and parried her question with another:

"Will you come with me?"

Mara started in evident surprise:

"I, Desmond! Down to Kerry! Isn't it an awfully wild place?"

"Well, it's not the most peaceable of districts, certainly," he answered, smiling; "but it would at least have the charm of novelty. Come with me, dear," he went on persuasively. "It will be a long business, and I can't go alone. Should you mind it very much?"

Mara did not answer, she was looking out of the window, from which she could see the distant road. Coming along on horseback was a figure she knew well even so far off. What would Warden say? If she went, would he follow her?

"But the people," she said. "Aren't they very wild, Desmond? I should be afraid of them."

"Do you think I should let you go if I thought you would be in one moment's danger? But I won't urge you; it shall be as you please."

"Do you mean to go?"

"I must, darling," he answered. "I never shirked any work in my life, and I can't begin now."

"Do you want me to come?" she questioned.

"When do I not want you? Will you, darling? I shall be so wretched alone."

Mara looked at him closely, and for a moment a feeling of compunction seized her. How good he had always been to her, and how he loved and trusted her, and what had she ever given him in exchange! She made up her mind to go with him. Sooner or later the knowledge of her real character must come to him; let her make him happy while she could.

"I will go, Desmond," she cried; "so you need not go alone."

"That's my own wife," said Desmond, in much relief. "Hang it! Here's that fellow Warden! He's always about now. Are you going to ride with him, Mara?"

"Yes, dear; I wish you could come, too, but I suppose you're too busy, as usual," said Mara, gathering up her skirt and going out to the hall door.

Desmond put her into her saddle, and went back to his study with a half sigh. Somehow his wife seemed very little with him of late. And he thought with some satisfaction that down in Kerry he would have her all to himself.

Meanwhile Mara was calmly enjoying her ride. She meant to tell Warden of their going to Kerry some time before they parted, and he gave her an opening as they were slowly walking homewards.

"Well, when will you come out again with me—to-morrow?"

"No, I'm afraid I can't manage it," said Mara. "We are going away in a day or two, Desmond and I, and I shall be very busy packing up."

"Going away?" cried he in astonishment. "But where? You won't go for long?"

"That depends on what you call long. We are going to Kerry on some case of Desmond's. He says it will take some months."

"Months!" repeated Warden. Then he came close and seized her hand. "Do you imagine I am going to be without you for months, or even one month? Don't go, stay here!"

Mara shook her head.

"I must go. And what right have you got to express any interest in my movements, Mr. Warden?"

"The right you have given me when all through these last weeks you have let me be with you in the full consciousness that I loved you as I ought never to have loved any married woman. Don't deny it, Mara. I love you madly, and you know I do."

"Oh, how can you say such dreadful things?" cried Mara. "How could I possibly know anything of the kind?"

Warden laughed bitterly.

"How do people know these things? Was there ever a woman yet who didn't know when she was loved? Mara, I have broken the ice now, and taken the plunge. Sometimes I have thought that you cared for me just a little. Is it possible?"

"I will not hear any more at all," said Mara. "You are really most shocking, Mr. Warden. I don't think I will ever speak to you again. Good-bye!"

She touched her horse with the whip, but Warden gripped her hand.

"You shall not go like this! Do you think I am going to be played with and cast off, after having been fool enough to love you as I do? I will see you again, Mara! Tell me where and when?"

Mara saw that in his present mood she could not trifle with him.

"Well, perhaps you may come and call to-morrow afternoon; but mind, you must not say anything about what you have told me to-day. I shall be dreadfully angry if you do."

A few days afterwards she and her husband were trying to settle down in Kerry. It was no light or un hazardous task that Desmond Blake had undertaken, as he well knew, this unravelling of a mystery that had baffled the local police. He had need of all his penetration, all his courage, all his strength, mental and bodily; for in that wild district where the murder had been committed, all the people, either from choice or fear, were leagued against him. He knew that, though the full details of the crime were probably known to many besides the perpetrators, even to friends and relations of the victims, yet not one of them would dare to give his testimony truly, knowing that if he broke the oath of silence that had been imposed upon him, his life would pay the penalty. And Desmond was well aware, too, that he must beware of his own life, for any one of those wild, desperate men would think it his duty to kill him who had come to bring some of them to justice.

The days passed on; spring ripened into a glorious, warm summer, and slowly but surely Blake's almost infallible penetration was solving the mystery of the case he was engaged on, and every day was wrapping the web of circumstantial evidence more remorselessly round the perpetrators of the

crime. And day by day resentment, passionate hatred, sick fear, grew and swelled in the hearts of those men whose bitterest enemy he was : day by day the determination increased to stop this daring inquisition that was going on, by fair means or foul ! Very soon came the question : should they die ignobly at the hangman's hands through Blake's instrumentality, or should he perish by their means before he could finish that carefully woven net of evidence ?

Blake was riding with his wife one day, returning from a long expedition to the mountains, where Mara had capriciously expressed a desire to go. They were riding slowly, for she was tired ; Pat—Desmond's servant, a man who had been with him ever since he had been able to afford one—and a couple of policemen following them at a short distance.

"And so the case is nearly ended, Desmond," Mara was saying joyfully. "Have you quite found out the murderers ?"

"To my own satisfaction ; but I haven't quite all the evidence. I mean that I have enough to show me that I am right, but not sufficient for a law court. But the missing link is close to my hand, and will soon join the whole together."

"How much longer will you be, then ?"

"Can't tell, darling. Not very long, I expect. Are you getting tired of it ?"

"Very," confessed she. "You see, there is nothing to do here, Desmond."

"Poor little martyr to a selfish husband, whom destiny has made a detective of ! Never mind, dear, you won't be here much longer, and then I'll take you away somewhere."

"Will you really ?" said Mara absently. She did not seem so delighted at the prospect as her husband had expected.

"Do you like this kind of work, Desmond ?" she questioned presently.

"I do, and I don't," said Desmond slowly. "I believe I was born to do it, I can do it well, and therefore I suppose I find it agreeable and absorbing when I'm engaged in it. But sometimes it seems an awful thing to track out and hunt down men to punish them for crimes that I'd have done myself, more than likely, had I been similarly placed. I hate to think of the number of men who have met their death through me."

"How strange !" said Mara wonderingly. "I should have thought you would be proud of your success, and of the many dreadful men you have brought to justice."

Desmond shook his head gravely.

"You don't know what death is, Mara ; how awful, how vast in its eternal mystery for us all, and above all for those men who face it steeped in crime. I often think——"

The sentence was never finished, for a shot echoed through the still calm of the evening, and Blake suddenly reeled forward in his saddle, and fell heavily on his horse's neck. Mara's heart almost stopped beating in deadly fear—fear for her own safety, not for the husband, who, for all she knew, was lying dead across his horse. She looked round her wildly for aid. Pat and the policemen were galloping towards her, startled by the shot. To her left a man's figure was speeding away, half crouching among the bushes ; and close at her side stood Desmond's motionless horse, bearing its unconscious burden. She heard as if in a dream Pat's despairing cry as he sprang to the ground ; she watched the men tenderly lift her husband from his saddle and lay him down on the grass at the side of the road, and still never moved from her horse till one of the policemen roused her by asking if she had seen any one, or could tell where the shot had come from. She saw him start with his comrade in pursuit in the direction she pointed out, bidding Pat wait till they returned to help carry "the master." Then she looked at the still form on the grass, and for the first time a fear lest he should be dead came into her mind.

"Pat, he is not dead ?" she gasped.

"He is not, ma'am. But he is greatly hurt. He's coming round now, ma'am."

"Pat, what's the matter ?" came in Desmond's voice, strangely weak and faint. "Where am I ? And my wife ; she is safe ?"

"She is, sir," and Pat glanced up with an almost imperative gesture to his mistress.

She obeyed it, slipped off her horse, and came and knelt at her husband's side.

"I am here, Desmond. Are you badly hurt ?"

He tried to smile cheerfully, but he was lapsing again into unconsciousness.

"Not very. I—I can't talk, darling. Don't bother about me."

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MISS LATIMER OF BRYANS.

By ELEANOR C. PRICE.

Author of "Alexia," "Red Towers," "The Little One," etc.

CHAPTER XXV. A RESOLUTION.

THE next day found Lucy Thorne in one of her severest moods. Long before Geoffrey came down, he heard her scolding the servants in different directions. Immediately after breakfast Mr. Thorne and his eldest son escaped to their farm affairs, banging doors behind them with even more energy than usual.

Geoffrey went off to smoke in the garden. He walked up and down between the long, straight borders, in summer so gay and sweet, now made tidy and dismal for winter, though a rose still lingered here and there. One lovely bud, shading from rosy copper to cream, held up its head among the shrivelling leaves of a bush near the kitchen door. Geoffrey looked at it, smelt it, and finally broke it off and stuck it in his button-hole. At the same moment Lucy appeared at the door. Her square face was set and stern; she gave one sharp glance at Geoffrey and the flower, then looked round the garden, seemingly in search of somebody else to scold.

"Lucy," said her brother, "come here and take a turn with me. I want to talk to you."

"I have no time to waste on your nonsense," said Lucy; but she came.

"I have been thinking of what you told me last night," he said, as they paced along the gravel path together.

"I know you have," Lucy answered. "And I wish you would stay in bed to

think, instead of walking about over my head until I don't know what time. Especially as you can do no possible good by thinking."

"I have come to a conclusion, Lucy, and I want to tell you."

"Well?"

"I feel sure that there cannot be the smallest grain of truth in what you hinted to me last night."

Lucy gave a short laugh.

"Yes," he went on, "the thing is an absurdity. You asked me if I liked Captain Nugent. Well, he is not a man I ever could like much, even if—I don't quite know why; he is not my sort, that's all. He has always been civil and nice to me, though. But don't you see that the very idea of his—of his flirting with that girl, or even admiring her very much, makes him out the most utter fool, as well as the most awful scoundrel. A man doesn't calmly go in for breaking his own neck in that sort of way. Don't you see, he couldn't expect such a thing as that to be kept secret long. It's not like a poor girl; he might be a brute in that way, but hardly such a hopeless fool. And think of all the circumstances."

"Circumstances don't always alter cases," muttered Lucy.

"Besides, it was only the day before yesterday—that afternoon—that I saw them out in the pony-cart together. They were driving after the hounds all day. If ever two people looked happy together, they did. He is not worthy of her; nobody thinks him so; nobody could be. But he is not deceiving her to that extent. He must care for her, you know. He is not such a brute, such a fool, such a false, degraded—well, I refuse to believe it, that's all. Look here, such a story

ought to be crushed at the very first breath. It is absolutely unbelievable, and it must not be allowed to get about the village. Do you hear?"

"I hear. But how am I to stop it, pray?" said Lucy crossly, yet a little impressed by his tone. "If five shillings only set Stokes's tongue wagging, five pounds wouldn't be likely to silence him."

"Stokes is a fool. Why, he is a good sort of fellow, not at all the man to be bribed. No; if you want to convince him that his precious ideas are founded on fact, that is the way to set to work. Tell him and his wife not to make such fools of themselves. Say that if he is curious, he had better ask somebody who knows where Captain Nugent was coming from when he met him at the gate. Tell him, if you like, that I know."

"But, Geoff, you don't know."

"I shall know. I shall ask Mr. Cantillon. Do you suppose such abominable nonsense is not going to be stopped?"

"Stokes saw him in the road, after he had left Mr. Cantillon."

"Well, I shall find out something, if I have to ask the man himself."

"You actually don't believe it then, Geoffrey? You don't believe it at all? You don't believe even that he stares at Maggie Farrant in church, I suppose?"

"Of course not; is it likely? Cannot you understand what I say? I don't believe one word of your miserable village scandal. Nor would any one in his senses, I should think."

Lucy hummed a tune as she marched along beside him.

"It would be rather dreadful for Miss Latimer, certainly," she said after a minute's silence, "if such a report ever came to her ears."

"Impossible! It could not. Don't mention her name," exclaimed Geoffrey.

"If you would allow me to speak, I was going to say that it would be quite as dreadful for the other girl, supposing there is no truth in it. When you go in for saying that Captain Nugent is incapable of being such a fool, such a brute, and so on, you might also find a good word to say for her. It would be almost as bad in her as in him."

"Quite as bad, and she is even more incapable of it. Yes, and you would think so, if she had ever talked about her friend to you. Poor girl! If I have not defended her, it is because I never felt it necessary. If there could be any truth in such im-

possible nonsense, it might be that the man admired and persecuted her, but as for his having any encouragement—no, Miss Farrant would soon show him what she thought of him. Besides, it would make her most awfully unhappy, worse than she is now, poor girl."

"Is she unhappy now? When did you see her?"

"The other day. I thought she did not look bright. I dare say she misses Miss Latimer a good deal, and that old man must be wearing to live with," Geoffrey answered, much more quietly.

Lucy was clever enough to ask a sharp question, but not to understand the sudden ceasing of his excitement, or to know that her question suddenly roused him to caution in speaking of Maggie Farrant, or, further still, that it was like a quick, positive little touch of an icy finger on his heart. His mind full of anxiety and indignation for Poppy in her lover's suggested falseness, he had indeed almost forgotten Maggie's unhappiness—that strange, sad figure he had seen at the gate. Of course that sight was among the things that lay in the background of his mind—those hidden, unconscious causes which have so great an influence. Something was pushing him on to all the angry unbelief he had expressed that day—something which, if fairly looked at, might have been found to be what these things so often are, an argument on the other side. It had come forward now and touched him, and Lucy did not know at all why the flush faded from his face, why his eyes grew dark and thoughtful, and he walked along looking on the ground.

"You like that girl," she said sharply.

Her temper was by no means sweet that morning.

"Of course I do," he answered, in rather a slow and dreamy manner. "Nobody could help it, I should think. She is very sweet and very pretty."

"Oh! Never heard you say so much before. When did you begin to think so?"

"I don't know. When I was making that drawing of her, I suppose."

"Dear me! Very sweet and very pretty! How nice! Well, Geoff, it wouldn't be much trouble to tell your fortune. Old Mr. Farrant confided to father, weeks ago, what a lot he thought of you. No trouble in that quarter. If the girl wants consoling, you had better console her. Besides, see what a beautiful plan it is, my dear. You would take her out of

everybody's way, and we need not run about contradicting scandals any more. There! Put that in your pipe and smoke it. What can a man want beyond 'very sweet and very pretty'? What else in the world matters, I should like to know? And a good charitable work into the bargain. There, Geoff. Go and see her this afternoon, and give her my nice rose which I saw you steal."

Geoffrey took all this quietly. He appeared to be only half listening to Lucy's "chaff," which was of a kind not uncommon at Sutton Bryans.

"Oh, do you want your rose?" was all he said.

"No, boy. Keep it, bless you. I like to see it where it is," said his sister, who had now chattered herself into a better humour. "Good-bye. I can't waste any more time with you. Look here—don't worry about all that nonsense. I'll tell Annie Stokes what you say, and frighten her a bit. Don't go asking questions of Mr. Cantillon; it would bother him awfully, and do no good, I dare say."

She hurried away down the long path, and Geoffrey saw no more of her that morning. She spent it industriously, driving her men and maids hither and thither with all the practical energy of a former generation. He, loitering under yellow or leafless trees in the orchard and garden, dreamed away the hours like any idle young man of to-day, who thinks himself, perhaps, a genius misunderstood. Sometimes, as on this November morning, Frank Thorne, the farmer, the man knowing in horses, could find no words to express the sad extent of his contempt for Geoffrey. Even his father, when they met at dinner, wondered that the fellow was not out hunting on such a splendid day. He and Frank were kept at home by business, but while Geoffrey could ride, there was no reason why all the horses should be eating their heads off in the stable.

In the afternoon Geoffrey walked off to the village without speaking to any of them again. He felt miserable, anxious, and lonely; restless, eager to do something, yet not knowing what to do. He thought that Porphyria might as well have let him go to Spain. He was of no use here, to her or to anybody else. The only pleasure left in life, of course, was to see her sometimes; yet was it a pleasure really worth having, worth being called so, when in spite of all one's struggles after unself-

ishness, pain and heartache would have the best of it so often? And now, if he had stayed at Bryans to see the ruin of her happiness and the breaking of her heart! For though Geoffrey assured himself that there must, could, should be no truth in that village story, it made him uneasy in the very depths of his being, and weighed on his imagination like a bad dream or a thundercloud.

Mr. Cantillon's study seemed to be the best place to get rid of worrying fears and fancies, and there Geoffrey found himself sitting near a bright fire, later in the afternoon. The fog of the morning had cleared softly away, and the sun had come out, yellow in a pale and misty sky, with banks of purple cloud lying behind the woods, which shone against them light gold. The sunshine was so soft, so unobtrusive, that Mr. Cantillon did not even think of protecting his books by pulling the blind down. He sat in his usual corner, with his back to the light, and there was the slightest touch of impatience mixed with his benevolence as he looked at Geoffrey's face opposite. It was a pity, he thought, that this fellow, with all his manliness and courage, could not possess a better fund of cheerfulness. He loved him, but sometimes he was a little angry with him. This afternoon he had some excuse, for Geoffrey had interrupted him in the middle of scribbling down a kind of sketch of what he might, perhaps, one of these days, be able to say to Fanny Latimer. Her picture seemed to smile more charmingly than ever, while he looked at her and wrote. Then the paper had to be dashed into a drawer, and the Rector, with cheeks slightly flushed and hands a little trembling, had to turn round and receive Geoffrey.

Now that he was there, the young man did not seem to have much to say. As to breaking out upon the anxiety that filled his mind with doubt and confusion in spite of himself, that was quite impossible. He saw that there had been much good sense in Lucy's last words to him that morning, advising him not to bother Mr. Cantillon. Not without better reason, certainly. Lucy generally carried out what she undertook, and she would probably succeed, if she set about it in earnest, in nipping the keeper's gossiping imaginations in the bud. The thing was too serious, tremendous, terrible, to be mentioned to Mr. Cantillon without absolute necessity. That might arrive, if it were true. Till then such an

unnatural possibility must not be connected with Captain Nugent's name, or with poor Maggie Farrant's.

But Geoffrey could not help thinking about it, and this gave him a queer appearance of absent-mindedness, almost of sullenness, in the eyes of the Rector.

"You did not come here to talk about the weather, Geoffrey?" said Mr. Cantillon, after a few uninteresting remarks had passed between them.

The touch of impatience about his eyes and mouth found its way into his voice now, and startled his visitor.

"Am I disturbing you, Mr. Cantillon?" he said, standing up.

"No, my dear fellow. Sit down. I am as idle as yourself," and the Rector gave a faint sigh. "I wonder you are not out with the hounds to-day," he said. "What are you doing? Drawing? You find some pretty sketches about Sutton, I should think."

"I didn't care to hunt to-day. No, I have not been drawing," answered Geoffrey.

Then he was silent. The Rector squeezed up his mouth and looked at him oddly.

"Pity her majesty did not let this fellow go to Spain," he thought. "Why did she want him dangling here? That plan of hers and Fanny's will never—" but then Geoffrey interrupted him in a manner which made him smile, by speaking of the very person who was in his mind.

"I have not seen you since the day before yesterday," he began. "Do you remember, I met you as I was riding home, and I asked you to look out for some one at the avenue gate?"

"To be sure. Of course I remember."

"And do you mind telling me—was it—was I right, I wonder? Afterwards I thought it was hardly possible."

Mr. Cantillon hesitated a moment; he could not help it. He felt bound in honour to the girl who had poured out her trouble to him, and he quite saw that that trouble—in present circumstances at least—was no business of Geoffrey Thorne's. And yet something made him feel that it would be better to trust Geoffrey—better for the girl that he, who had seen her in that strange state of grief, should know what was the real reason of it.

Only the day before, Miss Fanny Latimer and Mrs. Nugent had had tea with the Rector, and these two match-making women had again returned to the subject of Maggie Farrant and the marriage

which was to be wished for her. Fanny had positively declared that Geoffrey Thorne by his admiration had made old Mr. Farrant, at least, pretty sure of his intentions. He had told Poppy so, she said. Mrs. Nugent had harped on the string of Maggie's really unfortunate beauty, and the possible foolishness of Arthur's friends. She really did not see, she confessed, how dear Poppy, with every wish to be kind, could have that girl at the Court if there were people staying there. Even Arthur, she saw, thought it a little awkward yesterday.

To this the Rector had replied that Captain Nugent had expressed some sympathy and interest about the girl.

Oh, no doubt that was very possible. Dear Arthur was so good-natured, so amiable, and so ready to make all Poppy's friends his own.

In answer to a direct question from Fanny, the Rector had said that he had seen no sign at all of Geoffrey Thorne's special admiration for Maggie Farrant. On which he had been crushed by the smiling remark:

"Then, Henry, I really think you have been a little blind. You don't wish it, and so you won't see. I can't think why you don't wish it, when Poppy does, and she knows them both better than you do."

The Rector shrugged his shoulders and made her a bow.

To-day Geoffrey's questions were making him think that possibly the eyes of these ladies might have been better than his own. Fanny's influence with him was great, and he could not, of course, deny that for Maggie her plan was excellent. Only—Geoffrey and a girl like that! Geoffrey, whose secret he knew! Was such a descent possible? The Rector was too romantic to think it.

He felt, however, that it was best to be quite open with him, and therefore, after a minute's thought, he said very gravely:

"Well, you know, I am sorry for poor Miss Farrant. She is not very wise, I dare say—a little morbid—but after all she is very young. Poor girl, almost a child, we must remember. And Miss Latimer has been so much to her. On Maggie's side, at least, it has been one of those friendships which seem to want a stronger name. And now she fancies she has lost her. One sees both sides so well. Yes, it was she, poor girl. There she was at the gate, her one idea to catch a sight of Porphyria

as she drove through. It affected me very much, I must say. She talked to me frankly, poor child. I tried to persuade her to go home. Afterwards they overtook her, and brought her up to tea at the Court while I was there. But even then she did not look happy."

"She has altered a good deal, I fancy," said Geoffrey in a low voice.

"Yes, in the last few weeks. She took it remarkably well at first, not really realising the change. And I don't think any of us have taken the trouble of realising it for her. There is something a little peculiar, you see, in the whole position."

"I see."

Geoffrey's face was half hidden by his hand as he leaned forward, staring into the fire. Mr. Cantillon, lying back in his chair, lowered his eyes slowly from the ceiling to Fanny Latimer's portrait. The sun shone in softly, the fire flickered; there was stillness and peace in the quaint little room, in the old house by the quiet road, where nothing ever passed but a carriage driving to or from the Court, or a cart from an upland farm. It was a wonderful atmosphere for thinking things over, for coming to calm and deliberate conclusions, away from the hurry and pressure of common life.

Geoffrey's next remark was suggested by thoughts which Mr. Cantillon did not in the least understand. Oddly enough, however, he had something in his mind which matched them, and therefore he was quite ready with a suitable answer. Also, being a little preoccupied, the strangeness of the young man's suggestion, coming from him, was not so great as it would have seemed to most people.

"Ever since I knew Miss Farrant," he said—"I mean, of course, since she grew up—I have felt somehow that she was in the wrong place. It's a pity, isn't it, for people to be put where they can't stay? Of course I know the friendship has been everything for her; but it does leave her out in the cold, and then"—he paused—"how is she ever to be satisfied with any other kind of life? Her queer old home may be all right enough; but by-and-by, when the old man dies, I don't quite see what is to happen. She is too pretty to be thrown on her own resources, and—after all this—perhaps she ought to marry a gentleman, and won't."

"No, no; that is what we all feel," said the Rector hastily. "I assure you the thought of her worries us all. I believe

it is a real distress to Miss Latimer. And her aunt is most anxious, most kind—partly for the girl's own sake, partly because it really does weigh on her niece a good deal. It is all a natural consequence—nothing more. But there is another consequence that Miss Frances Latimer is a little afraid of. There will be some young men coming down shortly—friends of Captain Nugent's—to shoot, you know, and so on. She says she cannot have Miss Farrant at the house then. Considering what young men are, and that everybody seems to think her so amazingly pretty, and that one fears, not being the wisest of young women, she may be ready to snatch at any amusement that falls in her way, perhaps to flirt a little—well, I dare say they are right. But, poor girl, it will be the first time in her life that she has been left out, and I am afraid she will feel it. But they are right—they are right. By-the-bye, do you think her so amazingly pretty?"

"Yes," said Geoffrey in the same quiet tone, still gazing into the fire. "Yes, most unusually pretty. A foreign type of face. Not less interesting for that. I don't see why she should not be thought on a level with Captain Nugent's friends."

The Rector started. He had talked on, as his way was with a person who inspired confidence, quite forgetting that this person's views might be at all different from his own. These last words of Geoffrey's seemed suddenly to remind him of what the young man's good sense and tact frequently made him forget—that he was not talking to a "gentleman." Instinctively he pulled himself up; and his manner took the faintest shadow of caution and distance, hardly noticeable by any one who had not known him all his life.

"It would not be possible to ask her to meet them," he said.

Then his natural goodness conquered; he laughed, and looked kindly at Geoffrey.

"After all, Miss Maggie's fate is not in your hands or mine," he said. "We may trust these ladies to take the right course. Miss Latimer is fond of the girl, and certainly will spare her any disappointment she can. In fact, I know she has thought a good deal about her future."

He stopped short. If Geoffrey had been looking up, the Rector's expressive face might have told him something he did not yet know. But he did not look up. Mr. Cantillon fancied that his dreams were of

pity for Maggie Farrant, and thought that Fanny had been right and himself wrong. In truth, Geoffrey needed no assurance of Porphyria's goodness. What filled his thoughts was a far more obstinate doubt. Was her own future so happy, so sure, that she could afford to waste anxiety on that of her friend? And could anything be done to remove the danger, to bring the wrong right? He hardly knew how he felt, or what he would do.

Mr. Cantillon watched him with a certain wonder. He could not at all make out what was in his mind. He could not believe what had at first occurred to him, that some sordid feeling of class animosity was setting Geoffrey on the side of the Farrants against his old loves and admirations and sympathies. It would be very possible, in a man of the Thorne stock—yet he could not believe it of Geoffrey.

"You have a pretty bud there," he said at last, as the young man remained silent. "A late Gloire de Dijon, is it not?"

"Yes, I think so," said Geoffrey, suddenly getting up.

He seemed to have nothing more to say. He had not gained much, perhaps, by his visit to the Rector; only a clear view of the anxieties of the Court respecting Maggie Farrant. They were fairly real anxieties—worries, rather; yet they seemed very childish and futile, compared with those fears that obstinately lingered with him, growing in strength hour by hour, in spite of his own indignant language to Lucy.

"We have been talking like a couple of old women," thought the Rector when he was gone. "But he is a safe fellow, poor Geoffrey. I wonder, now—but no, no. Very sorry, Fanny, but he is a thousand times too good for that poor girl. The saving of her, of course—but no, he never will. How could he?"

And turning again to his writing-table, Mr. Cantillon took out the sheet of paper which he had so hastily hidden. Looking it over, his eyes and mouth softened into their sweetest smile. What would Fanny say?

He had wasted half an hour scribbling down a few more thoughts that occurred to him, when he heard a step in the garden passage, which was followed by a knock at the study door. With an impatient sigh he threw his paper back into the drawer, and called out: "Come in." The sun was just gone behind the south-west line of woods, and twilight was steal-

ing into the low room, where the fire, too, had died down from its former beauty.

At the Rector's voice Geoffrey Thorne came back into the room. He would not sit down. He looked very pale and much agitated. The hand that Mr. Cantillon kindly took was as cold as ice.

"My dear fellow, what have you been doing?"

"I am going to do something," said Geoffrey, smiling faintly. "I have been down there on the bridge, making up my mind, and now I have come back to tell you."

"It is something desperate," said the Rector. "What do you mean? Don't do it, for goodness' sake!"

"Not at all desperate. I think it may be a good thing." Again he looked hard into the fire, turning his face away from his friend. "I am going to ask Miss Farrant to marry me."

"Geoffrey!" cried the Rector. He choked, his voice shook, and tears blinded his eyes. "What? Why? My dear good man, why are you doing this? Is it a sudden idea? Take care, take care. You may be acting most unfairly both to her and yourself. You don't really care for the girl. You are doing this out of pity. It is a tremendous mistake. Don't do it, Geoffrey. I solemnly beg you, don't do it."

"My reason is not at all what you think," the young man answered. He seemed to gain coolness and firmness from the Rector's agitation. "Don't worry yourself, sir. It will be all right. I have other reasons which I cannot explain. Only I want you to tell me one thing. You said that Miss Latimer had thought a good deal about her friend's future. Do you think this would please her or not?"

"Please her! She and her aunt have wished it for months," said Mr. Cantillon with rash truthfulness.

He would have given something to recall his words, and even began to contradict them as he watched Geoffrey's face and saw it flush suddenly, then grow pale, and harden into still firmer resolution.

"Very well," he said, without listening further. "Thank you. That is what I wanted to know. I may, perhaps, please her then. But it is quite likely that I shall be refused."

Mr. Cantillon shook his head. He did not think it likely.

"You are doing a foolish, romantic

thing," he said. "Sit down and talk it over. Stop—where are you going?"

He followed his visitor down the passage, and even to the end of the garden. But Geoffrey was beyond his overtaking. He might have been hurrying to the highest joy on earth, so quick were his steps over the bridge and along the road, so eager and hurried was the hand that pulled the old clanging bell at Church Corner.

"MY PRE-EMPTION."

A WESTERN SKETCH.

"WILL you be afraid to do it?" asked my brother doubtfully.

Now, as a matter of fact, I was afraid—horribly afraid; but, equally as a matter of fact, I was not going to say so, and fervently declared over and over again that there was nothing I desired so much in the world as to go and "pre-empt" on the hundred and sixty acres of creek land that bordered our ranch.

As it was, the two boys had taken up all the land they were entitled to—had pre-empted, homesteaded, and taken up a timber-claim. But this hundred and sixty acres still remained—a sort of Naboth's vineyard—just at the end of the ranch. All our ready money was gone in the improvements we were obliged to make, and we could only just command the dollar and a quarter an acre required for pre-empting. But the question was, who could pre-empt?

The land hunger was strong upon us all. It seemed a thousand pities that, lying next to the ranch as it did, this piece of land on Cherry Creek should belong to any one else. In fact, it became a sort of ever-present nightmare. Nowhere, would the boys declare, could such alfalfa be grown fit to cut twice, nay, three times, a year; nowhere could a finer corn patch be planted; nowhere was better irrigation to be had. All the evening they had been talking of ways and means without ceasing. And only that morning, as I drove into the town with the cream, had I heard one of them say, as they watched me safely across the Santa Fé track:

"If only we could pre-empt over again," to which the other, being a fellow with a great faculty for silence, laconically replied: "You bet!"

In the creamery I met some friends,

and one of the girls began talking of her pre-emption, and then, turning to me, asked if I had concluded to take up land, and in answer to my question: "Can girls pre-empt?" they all burst out laughing.

"Sakes alive! of course they do. Why, Maisie here and your friend Ella both pre-empted when they were twenty-one, and I guess you are that."

"But—but," I faltered, "you have to live on your land for six months, build a shanty, dig a well, and do fencing; how can a girl do all that?"

However, they one and all declared it was easily done, done every day; as for the loneliness, one need only sleep there, and spend the day where one pleased, adding:

"Laud sakes, you English girls are so fearsome. Who would harm a woman alone on the prairie?"

This was kindly and indulgently said; but, somehow, I did not like to hear it. What an American girl could do an English one might find courage for, I thought, and—the boys did want the land so. The end of it all was that in half an hour I was walking out of Burt Harris's office, having enrolled myself as an American citizen, and taken up my hundred and sixty acres, Judge Craig, as I paid over the necessary fees, saying: "I con-gratulate you, ma'am, on being a citizen of this free and enlightened country, an' I du allow," he kindly added, for we were great friends, "that this Republic is to be con-gratulated as well."

So I drove home, my pre-emption deed in my pocket, looking around me with new eyes on the cultivated land as I passed it. That was a fine field of alfalfa, certainly; but the boys had said that the best alfalfa about could be grown on my pre-emption.

All that afternoon I said nothing, in fact I had no one to speak to till we met again at supper-time, half-past six; and when that was over and the boys had lit up, I took out the deed and laid it on the table. It was after he had read it that my brother asked if "I was not afraid?" and I had answered in the negative with a high-handed assurance I was far from feeling. For the glamour of the land which had been strong upon me all the afternoon, was departing with the sun, and I was only feeling how dark and lonely it would be far out on the prairie, with not a human being within call for many a long mile.

But it was my own doing, and I had

burnt my ships behind me, knowing well as I did that the boys could not be with me, but must stay at home with the animals. It would be well enough during the greater part of the day, for they promised to come over each afternoon and have supper with me, and although I knew this would entail extra work upon them, I am afraid I was selfish enough to accept their offer.

"And I tell you what it is," said my eldest brother, who had been silently smoking for the best part of the time, "you shall have Rorie and the cart all to yourself, and then you can ride or drive home whenever you want to."

This, I felt, was a great concession. Rorie, of course, was mine, but to be allowed the cart as well, and the boys to be content to drive into town on the buckboard! We all had our own horses, but the dog-cart—no buggy, if you please—was joint property, and my horse, who was a broncho, had been trained to draw it. I did feel pleased, for the two things I liked the best in our rough-and-tumble life out west, were Rorry and the baking. Washing tired me frightfully, so did sweeping, but the cooking I liked, and the sight of the sweet crusty brown loaves coming out of the oven was a real pleasure to me. And as for Rorie, when once I was on his back, I was in possession of a new sense, and all the minor worries of the day were things of the past, as we "loped" happily along together. He was such a clever horse, too: could turn on a sixpence as the saying was, after a cow brute; never trod by any chance on the prickly cactus, which almost carpeted the ground in parts; never wanted to be led to a bluff or fence for mounting, but would let me get off the ground on to his back.

So it came to pass that one fine day the beginning of May found us progressing in the waggon towards the land I had taken up. The boys had already built a one-room frame shanty for me, and a stable for Rorie; the doors and windows for the same, which you buy ready made, were piled in the waggon, together with the stove, bedstead—or rather springs and bedding—the cooking utensils, consisting of a kettle, frying-pan, and saucepan, crockery of various kinds, and table, and two chairs, knives, forks, etc., a ham, a bag of flour, and another of potatoes, besides eggs and canned meats and fruits. We started directly after our twelve o'clock dinner, and came in sight of our destination about three.

The tiny shanty looked fearfully lonesome with no window or door, set down by itself in the middle of the wilderness; but the creek at a little distance behind it seemed home-like, at least so I thought, little guessing the trick the same creek was about to play me shortly.

In less than no time, for so it seemed to me, the boys had the doors and windows in, the stove fixed up, and the kettle boiling for tea, or rather supper. There was no biscuit to make, for I had baked a big batch of bread only that morning, and brought a couple of loaves along with me. The coffee was soon made; the cow—for I was to have a cow—milked, and we had supper ready: cold beef, cucumber, potatoes, fresh bread and butter, and a can of peaches.

Then, the meal over—and it seemed that no one ate anything that evening—the boys brought in the rest of the things, tied up the cow at one end of the frame shed and Rorie at the other, put the cart in shelter, got me a couple of pails of water, brought in all the cut wood and pitch pine for kindling, said, "Good-bye, old girl, take care of yourself; we'll be over to supper to-morrow," jumped into the waggon, and I was sadly watching it, as it became less and less in the distance. Then, I am ashamed to say, lovely as the evening was, I went indoors, bolted the door safely, flung myself face downwards on the bed, and cried. It was all so dreadfully lonesome.

However, I had luckily just sense enough left to know that if I worked myself up into a state of nervous excitement, there would be no sleep for me that night, so I presently dried my eyes, unbolted the door, and looked around.

All was so vast, not a living thing in sight, all rolling prairie, bluff upon bluff, and at the edge of the horizon the foothills shut out everything but the snowy peaks which rose far above them; and in the silence and solitude of that great prairie my little shanty and cowed-looking specks. This would never do, I knew; I should only get more frightened at my loneliness; I must find something to do, and I determined to pass the time by making a fresh jar of yeast, as there was only about a cupful left from my last baking—just sufficient to leaven the farful. So I went to the potato sack, and very soon had a saucepanful on the fire; and as the way we made yeast in the far West may be found interesting, and I can vouch for the

quality of bread it made, I will give the recipe, as it was given to me by the wife of one of the oldest settlers in the country. Some people always used the German cake yeast, but to my mind at that high altitude it made the bread too dry to eat after a couple of days' keeping; others, again, put hops, which grew wild in the creek, into their home-made yeast, but we much preferred, after trying them all, our own recipe, which kept good for months, only requiring, about three or four times a year, a cake of Warner's yeast to be added to it, to freshen it up.

When the potatoes were thoroughly cooked, we drained the water off, and set it aside, and then proceeded to mash the potatoes in the saucepan, using for the process a smooth, strong glass bottle. Of course, one ought to have a pestle and mortar, but I had no extra luxuries in the way of cooking utensils. When the potatoes were thoroughly mashed, a full tea-cup of powdered white sugar was added—castor sugar was the best we could get—and well stirred in, and then the same process was gone through with another cupful of sifted salt. By this time the mixture was lukewarm, as was also the water in which the potatoes had been boiled; this was now poured on to them again, and the painful beaten up briskly for a few minutes, and then the whole mixture put into the yeast jar on the top of what remained of the old yeast. It was then set aside for half an hour upon a part of the stove that was fairly warm, and at the end of that time it would foam up and run over the jar. And it was then fit for use, and only needed to be kept in a cool place with a lid on.

About a big cupful would make a baking of six loaves, and delicious bread it was, sweet, crusty, and nutty. It was best, however, if your water was hot enough, to scald the flour before adding the yeast, taking care it got quite lukewarm before you put it in.

I used to make dreadful mistakes at first, for owing to the altitude at which we lived, it was not enough for water to boil, to be at boiling point. If when we saw the steam coming out of the spout of our kettle, and heard the water bubbling, we thought we might venture to make our coffee, and boil our eggs, we found ourselves greatly mistaken. It took five minutes in what we at home called galloping boiling water to cook an egg lightly, and as for coffee, it had to boil,

and boil, and boil, before it was ready for clearing.

By the time I had finished my yeast, and went to the shanty door to look out, the last ray of the sun had disappeared behind the range, leaving no twilight; but a clear, cool radiance was overspreading the heavens in another direction, and in a minute or two the moon came up, almost as light as day. I could see to read even in the shanty by it. With it, too, sprang up the cool breeze we always got about nine p.m., making sleep possible, however hot and sultry the day had been. I could open the fly-netting door of the shanty also, and the door of the animals' stable. And we all enjoyed the cool, sweet breeze; even old Mischief the dog, who had up till now been lying lazily in the shade of the shanty with his tongue out, too hot to stir, came to my side and nestled against my knee.

How long we stood there enjoying the evening I cannot say. I only know we were aroused by a prolonged and melancholy howl coming across the prairie, and answered, after a moment's silence, by another howl from beyond the creek. Mischief began to growl, and sniff uneasily, and I started up. It was time for us all to go to bed; the coyotes were roaming round. I hastily bolted the cow-shed, called Mischief in, and shut myself up for the night, turning up the lamp as I did so. It seemed a more human and comforting light than that of the cold moon outside, somehow, and having laid the fire and filled the kettle, I wound up my watch, for no one would come out there to ask for the tax on it, I felt sure; undressed with great rapidity, and went to bed, fully expecting to lie awake all night. But Fate was kind to me, and in a very few moments I was fast asleep. When I woke up it was broad daylight; the sun was streaming in through the chinks of the rough shutter, and for a moment I gazed around me in surprise. "Where could I be, and why had not the boys called me long before?" And then I realised that the dreaded first night on "my pre-emption" was passed, and I got up with much joy. Rorie and Daisy were restlessly moving about next door, but old Mischief lay quite still by my bed, his grey muzzle tucked away between two shaggy paws, and his one eye—for the poor old fellow had lost the other in a fight in his long-past youth with a coyote—warily fixed upon a stray sunbeam as if he anti-

cipated danger from that source. I felt hungry, too, for it was long past the time for my first cup of tea. Alas! here there were no boys to boil the kettle; clearly if I wanted tea I would have to get it myself.

I jumped up, put a match to the pitch-pine kindling, and flung the house open. Then I put on my bathing-dress, stuck an ulster on over it, and went and milked Daisy, had my tea and some bread and butter, took hold of Rorie's halter and went down to the creek for my tub. This proceeding saved walking for one thing, and gave the horse his morning drink for another; so Rorie kindly took me upon his back, and with old Mischief by our side, we walked quietly towards the creek.

It was a lovely day, as usual at that time of the year, and the prairie was covered with flowers, from the bright orange-and-red cactus blossoms, which grew in great patches of colour all around, to the pretty pink but scentless dog-roses on little bushes not a foot high, whilst down by the creek sunflowers of all sizes, a kind of pale blue foxglove, and the azure larkspur, stood out well against the light green of the cotton-wood trees.

Rorie soon had his share of water, and then I waded up from the point I had watered him at to find a hole big enough to bathe in. The water was clear and cold, coming down as it did straight from the mountains; but it was also very shallow, a mere stream in its sandy bed, just over the ankles, and it sent the blood rushing up into one's head in a very unpleasant manner. However, I was soon lucky enough to find a big hole, quite deep, by the side of a huge stone which had evidently been washed down from the hills by some freshet, and here by sitting down I was up to my neck in water, and, after a good ducking, began to enjoy my bath, in spite of the wretched water-snakes, who speedily found me out and writhed all around me. But they were perfectly harmless, and, when once one got used to the unpleasant feel of them, not to be dreaded, although I must own I always had more or less the greatest dislike to the creatures. They were really, we were told, more water-seals than snakes; indeed, some friends of ours cooked them as such, but the same people were very adventurous in matters of food, and declared prairie dog was as delicate as young chicken. It may have been, but I cannot speak from experience.

Whilst in the water, I was much in-

terested in the proceedings of a young chipmunk—a pretty little animal something like a squirrel, with a long bushy tail, very cute-looking and friendly. He had bars of golden brown and black across his back, the red of a robin on his shoulders, a jauntily cocked-up tail of a pale brown, and very bright watchful eyes. Whenever I gave a splash he would pretend to be frightened and trot off a yard or so, then sit up on his haunches and regard me warily, stroking his nose with his fore-paws as he did so.

The blue birds and the robins also came to have a look at the strange creature in the creek, the latter being like its English namesake in everything except size, where it certainly scored, being a most enormous bird, almost as big as the domestic fowl.

My morning's bath being over, I rejoined Rorie and went home and dressed, made my bed, tidied up, had breakfast, and gave the animals theirs, and then got the water for the day from the creek, a matter I had reason to congratulate myself upon before the day was over. Then, for it was still early, I saddled Rorie, and he and I had a lovely two hours' ride up the creek.

It was too hot everywhere else, but in the sandy bed of the creek there was shelter; for its banks, with their cotton-wood fringe, were far above us, and kept the intrusive sun at a respectful distance. We were riding lazily along and meditating, for it was now past eleven, the necessity of turning back, when we were startled by an explosion far away up the mountains, that sounded as if a cannon had gone off. Could they be blasting for gold, I wondered? But Rorie gave a sudden start, and before I could rein him up, headed away from the creek, loped up its banks, and made for the shanty as fast as he could go. Wise Rorie, he had heard that sound before; he knew there was a freshet on, and the creek would boom in a few moments.

And as I turned round in the saddle I saw before me an immense wave of brown water come rushing along the bed of the creek, carrying everything before it, down from the cañon. The creek, which had been a mere silver streak, low down in its sandy bed, was now a brown rushing torrent, level with its banks, all the cotton-wood trees swaying before it, their leaves in many cases torn from them by the violence of the stream. Down with it,

too, were whirled cedar trunks and roots of old pines from the mountains, with what looked like the body of a dead animal, surprised whilst sleeping, whirling over and over in the flood, whilst countless blossoms of all the pretty flowers, draggled and torn into fragments, lay helpless on the top of the stream. Rorie was trembling and so was I, but it all happened in far less time than it takes to write about it.

More heartily than ever did I wish for the boys, for if this had happened whilst I was bathing, well, there might have been another body besides that of the dead coyote rolling over and over in the flood. All that day long the brown stream had a certain fascination for me; it made me feel somehow more lonely than ever. I ate my midday meal mechanically, but about five I roused up; the boys would be with me in an hour's time, and they should have a nice meal. So I lit my stove and prepared supper, thinking as I filled the kettle how lucky it was I had fetched plenty of water.

How thankful I was when I saw the white tilt of our prairie schooner making its way across the bluffs! I would coax the boys to spend the night in the waggon, I thought, and so they did when they saw what had happened; and by sun-up the next morning the creek, though full and rapid, was fairly clear.

After that I spent many another night at the shanty, and got quite callous over it in time.

We built a corral, and fenced and dug a well, and finally, to my great joy, I "proved up," and we were the proud owners of two ranches. But even now I shall not easily forget the first night and day I spent alone on "my pre-emption."

JASMIN : THE BARBER, POET, AND EMINENT PHILANTHROPIST.*

NOTE.

A GENTLEMAN of Bordeaux, who frequently met Jasmin, writes to us as follows of the poet and his work :

Of the genius of Jasmin—like that of Talma, for instance—a great part died out at his death. Read even in translations, his poems are fine; read in his own language, they are finer still; but they well-nigh reached perfection when heard

from his own lips. The poet really seemed to be transfigured when reciting; such was the spell which his emotion imparted to his utterance.

Vanity in Jasmin was oddly mixed with modesty, and simplicity with pride. When well advanced in years, he retained all the freshness and enthusiasm of youth. Unspoiled by success, he yet loved to be applauded, even by a child, and was visibly affected when he observed among his hearers a young girl moved to tears. Ever open to the claims of charity and friendship, his ear was over-sensitive to a whisper of rebuke. When I twitted him one day for losing his temper with a critic, whom he had almost literally taken by the throat, "*C'est surtout ma langue que je défends*," he cried, "*c'est ma mère, ma mie, ma fiancée, ma femme, ma fille, ma gloire, toute ma vie, que saie-je !*"

Another time, when talking with some very well-read people, whom he had delighted by reciting a new poem, he rather startled them by saying: "True, I have but a peasant's pipe, but I make better music than your '*grands joueurs de lyre*.' Lamartine and Victor Hugo are a thousand times more clever in conventional word-sounding. But do the people care to hear them? My Muse is far truer to nature, for hers is the tongue of those who are nature itself. Yes," pursued he, warming, and as he gave voice to it, there was poetry in his prose, "*Aques grans mousus (ces grands messieurs)* are mounted upon splendid steeds, with wings like those of Pegasus to soar into the heights, where haply few can follow them. I have but a sorry nag (*un tros de chibal*), but he carries me through all the roads that lead straight to the heart."

In person Jasmin was neither an Adonis nor a Hercules, although fairly well-featured, high of forehead, broad of chest, and strongly built. He seemed rather high-shouldered, and though brisk of step was clumsy in his gait. Excepting that his eyes were extraordinarily bright, you might perhaps have thought him a heavy-looking man; nor was there any brilliance in his ordinary talk.

But when he recited, he became quite a new creature. His stature seemed ennobled, his gestures full of grace. His eyes shot forth their tender rays or flashed their fiery flames and even lightnings as he spoke. His voice sighed, sobbed, whispered, sang, or thundered like an

* See pages 441 and 461.

orchestra—a symphony of sound. Seeing him, and listening well-nigh spell-bound by the magic of his tones, you never thought, as of an actor, "how well he plays his part." No, Jasmin was not an actor, but a poet, a creator. When hearing him recite, you seemed to be assisting at the birth of his ideas, and witnessing their growth into poetical development. As the words rang in your ears, their true feeling touched your heart. They thrilled your inner being by their passion and their pathos, their tenderness and truth.

I have heard Jasmin recite in public and in private; in the theatre or drawing-room; to an audience of peasants, or an intimate society of persons highly born. The effect which he produced was invariably immense; the emotions he elicited surprisingly the same.

THE ZITANA.

"Go not into the wild Basque land,"
The wrinkled gipsy said;
The Vega lay 'neath the sunset's smile,
The snow-clad peaks flushed red,
Under the mighty elm-trees' shade,
Where Boabdil's soul bewails
His bitter loss, 'mid the rippling songs
Of a thousand nightingales;
The Spanish girl stood, shy and scared,
And over the slender hand
The gipsy bent and muttered low,
As the rosy palm she scanned,
"Go not into the wild Basque land,
Shun the Biscayan shore;
Or the stateliest house in Grenada left
Will be desolate evermore."
She told her father of the bode,
And he smiled in haughty scorn;
She had never a mother to hush her fear,
She died when her babe was born.
She told her lover of the bode,
And he kissed the little hand,
And swore he would guard her wanderings,
Though she sought earth's farthest land.
And while the great elms swung o'erhead,
And nightingales sang their fill,
Love drew his wing on the troubled heart,
And its pulse grew calm and still.
Yet, or ever the summer fleeted by,
Where, under the sapphire skies,
Over the bright Biscayan seas
The wild Basque mountains rise;
Where under sunny Biarritz
The long waves' thundering shock
Breaks over many a rugged isle,
And many a caverned rock;
Caught in the undercurrent's clutch,
Tossed in the deadly swirl,
The sea swept out from the golden sand
A fair young Spanish girl.
And the father, whose helpless agony
Had watched the hopeless strife;
The lover who strove so desperately
To snatch her back to life;
As they knelt beside the sweet, pale corpse,
When they'd decked her for the tomb,
Remembered with a shuddering sigh
The grey Zitana's doom.

AN INDEFINITE ARTICLE.

A COMPLETE STORY.

It was not often that I gave advice to my friend Jameson. I did that much once, however. It was when he was in love.

Frida Langton was the girl's name, and he was growing desperate about her. He came into my rooms so often, and gave me the benefit of his views on the case so repeatedly, that at length, against my better judgement, I was obliged in mere self-defence to do something for him. For a wonder, I got him to listen to me one day and gave him my views.

Jameson, as I very well knew, was only afraid of Miss Langton's father, a wealthy but grim old gentleman, who would be highly indignant at the thought of bestowing his charming daughter upon a struggling journalist—as Jameson was. He thought Jameson a sufficiently agreeable and amusing young fellow—which meant that Jameson laughed at all the old gentleman's jokes, and very bad ones they were, with immense heartiness. Perhaps Jameson must be forgiven for this weakness under the circumstances.

The two young folks—I speak as a foggy of thirty-five—understood one another perfectly. If only the parental consent could be obtained!

"It seems to me," said I—to go back to the giving of the advice—"that there is a surprising lack of courage nowadays among the youth of these realms, if you are a fair example of them. Now, if I were in love with Miss Frida, I should go and make a neat speech to old Langton—"

"No you wouldn't," said Jameson decidedly.

"Setting forth," I continued, without noticing the interruption, "my strong points, and carefully keeping my weak ones in the background, or, better still, omitting any mention of them whatsoever. I should point out that my present position as a writer of light articles for the 'New Gazette,' although not in itself one of great emolument or glory, was likely to lead—in time—to something very good indeed." Here Jameson grinned. "I should then," I continued in a judicial, Master-of-the-Roll-like manner, "make an attack upon his feelings, pointing out the—a—the genuine affection which existed between his daughter and myself, and the danger, the imprudence, and, you might

also add, the wickedness of placing any bar, or shall I say any obstacle——"

"Look here," broke in Jameson irreverently, "this is all very fine. I can make up speeches in my own room by the dozen, but that's a very different thing from standing up in front of old Robert Langton and delivering them. As for writing him a letter—I've written 'em by the dozen and torn 'em up again."

"And then you always commit yourself by a written document," said I, "whereas—— by Jove, I have it!"

"Well?" said my friend, with his glum face turned upon me, expectant.

"Here you are," said I, "always bellowing out for subjects for your articles, and here's one ready to your hand whereby you may earn money and do the engagement business at a stroke."

"I don't quite see," began Jameson, looking at me with his doubtful Scotch countenance.

"Why, man alive, the thing's plain. Write an article setting forth your own case—you can do that easily enough—and work on Robert's feelings that way. You know he always reads the 'New Gazette.' Let him see himself as others see him, and show him what's expected of him. Head it 'Sorrows of a Lover,' or something of that sort, and, of course, make the parent cave in and bless the two young folks. Dwell on the depravity of mixing up money and love, and cruel bars to pure affection, and so on—and the thing's done. By Jove, my boy, I've put money in your pocket."

To this day, I cannot say whether I made the above remarks seriously, but certainly Jameson took them that way. He shook my hand warmly, said he could never thank me enough, and hurried away to think it over.

The next day when I was sitting over a peaceful pipe, in rushed my friend, thrust a manuscript into my hand, and gasped—my stairs are very steep—"Read that!"

I did, and it certainly was very good; Jameson could do a thing of that sort very well. Old Mr. Langton, from what I knew of him, was sketched to the life.

"Bravo!" I cried, as I threw down the sheets, "that ought to do your business, my boy."

I could see that Jameson was pleased with his own performance, but he asked in an indifferent tone: "Do you think it's good?"

In due time that article appeared in the "New Gazette," and in the interval Jameson had, so he told me, let Miss Frida into his secret. Both the young people awaited the result with great eagerness. Jameson used to call at the Langtons' as often as he dared, for he was a timid youth in those days; and on the evening when "A Warning to Parents"—which was the title of the article—appeared, I urged him to go and glory in the success of his own handiwork. He was afraid to do this, but he promised to let me know the result as soon as he could.

I had to go into the Midlands for two or three days, perhaps a week, during which time I forgot all about Jameson and his affairs; but as soon as I got back to my chambers both he and they were speedily brought to my knowledge. I was informed that my friend had called two or three times to see me, and I was not surprised, therefore, when he bounced in that evening in his usual impetuous manner and more out of breath than ever.

"Look here!" he burst out—and then I regret to say he used a bad word—"you've got me into a pretty mess!"

I begged him first to calm himself and then to explain himself. With the first end in view I pushed the tobacco towards him and declined to hear him further until he had lit up; then I asked him to proceed.

It appears that Mr. Robert Langton had duly received his "New Gazette"—containing the "Warning"—and, as was his custom, that light and airy journal was read aloud to him after dinner by Miss Frida. It was this young lady who had supplied Jameson with all the particulars of which he was now giving me the benefit.

Miss Frida, of course, when she came to it, gave due effect to the "Warning," which she read to the best of her ability. She made a point of losing her place in the middle, so that she might glance up and see how the choleric old gentleman was taking it. To her great delight his face was wreathed in smiles.

"Go on, my dear," he said. "Very good—very good!"

This was capital, thought Frida, and she proceeded with great unction; old Langton punctuating with chuckles.

When she had finished, the old gentleman slapped his leg with delight, and burst into a roar.

"By George, it's capital!" he cried,

"capital! A wonderful portrait! Ha, ha, ha! Don't you recognise it, my dear? Surely you must recognise it?"

Frida began stammering that she didn't know whether—

"Why," broke in the old gentleman, "it's your uncle George, to the life. Never saw anything like it. Some one's been taking observations, that's very certain. You don't mean to say you don't see it? Why, if any one had read that to me—I don't care who or where it was—I should have said at once, 'That's George Langton, and by some one who knows him well.' I shall get another 'Gazette' and send it off to him marked in blue pencil. Finest thing I ever saw in my life!"

This was the first I had heard of Uncle George; but it appeared that there lived at Leamington—so Jameson gloomily informed me, and he had but within the last day or two himself been made aware of the fact—a brother of Mr. Robert Langton, and the very counterpart in every respect of Miss Frida's father. Their intimate friends and relatives, with that kindness only found where true affection exists, called the two gentlemen respectively Tweedledum and Tweedledee, and I regret that I have forgotten which was —dum and which was —dee. The Leamington man had, strange to say, an only daughter, the single point of difference being that he was also blessed with a wife, whereas Robert was a widower of twenty years' standing.

Miss Frida—to resume the narrative—who had been quite hopeful while the reading of the article was in progress, was utterly aghast with her parent's wrong-headed conclusions. She dared not, however, hint at the truth, although she tried to persuade the old gentleman that it was unnecessary to communicate in any way with Mr. George, "even if it were worth while," she said; "they will be sure to see the 'New Gazette' at Leamington."

"Not they," cried Mr. Langton; "they see nothing in those benighted regions."

Not to waste time over it, he sent off his own paper that very night, first scoring a thick blue line all round the article, and further, as having doubts of brother George's intellectual acumen, and in direct contravention to the postal regulations, he scrawled underneath, completely obliterating a paragraph about the plague of rats in Lincolnshire:

"What do you think of this? How do you feel, eh?"

The old gentleman chuckled over this master-stroke of wit long after the paper was sent to post.

"It's perfectly plain to me," he said to Miss Frida. "I suppose you don't see a thing quite so easily as we men do; but it's perfectly clear to me. There's some one wants your cousin Edith to a dead certainty, and the old boy won't let 'em marry. I can see it all. They've got a friend on the Press to state the case, and very well stated it is."

Poor Frida was afraid to say a word, but waited with great unhappiness for the next thing to happen.

The next thing that happened was that a furious letter came from her uncle George. I saw it afterwards; it ran as follows:

"DEAR BROTHER,—Have received newspaper containing scurrilous article. Shall commence proceedings against 'New Gazette' for libel forthwith. If you recognise me in that outrageous description, that is sufficient evidence. The license of the Press nowadays is frightful; but they shall smart for it. I will have heavy damages or my name is not—that of your indignant brother—

"GEORGE LANGTON."

"The worst of it is," said Jameson gloomily, when he had reached this point in his narrative, "he has really written to the office of the 'New Gazette,' and made no end of a bother. Of course the old duffer's threat of action is ridiculous; but, nevertheless, it has got me into a fearful row with the editor, for I had to confess all about the real reason of the article."

"Very unfortunate," I interjected.

Perhaps Jameson thought I was too placid about the affair, for he burst out with great bitterness into a perfect denunciation of my well-meant advice, pointing out that not only was he involved in his present difficulty, but that his original state, re Miss Frida, was in no wise improved.

"There is only one thing to be done," said I, when Jameson had exhausted himself. "The time has now come when you may make, with great advantage, a clean breast of the whole thing, and state your views with regard to the young lady to Robert Langton with more effect than you could ever have done before." I gave this second piece of advice quite calmly and without being in any way

ruffled by my friend's hasty words. I told him he would regret them when in a calmer frame of mind.

Far from receiving my remarks with gratitude, however, and, to outward appearance, with no appreciation of my forgiving spirit, Jameson actually had the effrontery to say that, as I had got him into such a mess, I had better get him out of it myself.

Finally, after many failures on my part to make my friend see reason, I did, in a moment of weakness, consent to accompany him to the Langtons' that day and see what I could do for him. Thus did I repay good for evil. It was like Jameson to take my services as a matter of course.

We had arranged to meet at a certain hour, and go down together to the suburb where the Langtons lived. The time fixed was four o'clock, when Jameson was to call for me. He did not come, however, and after half an hour's waiting I concluded—he is of a very nervous and fearful temperament—that his heart had failed him.

Now, I have no wish to boast, but I do not hesitate to say that nine men out of ten in my place would have been only too glad to be relieved of the disagreeable duty in prospect, and would have considered themselves, and very reasonably, free from any further responsibility in the matter. But that is not my way of looking at a solemn promise and a solemn duty. I felt also that I should possibly state the case to better advantage if I were alone. Consequently, without further delay or debate in my own mind, I took train, and arranged on the way down what I was going to say.

I knew the Langtons' address, and I walked along the road where they lived, taking my time about it, and taking more and more time as I got nearer and nearer. Nothing is worse than to rush in upon people in a hurried or heated state.

All journeys and pilgrimages have an end somewhen and somewhere, and at length I reached the house itself—a very comfortable-looking place, standing in a good deal of ground. I identified it by its name—a long one which I have forgotten, but something like "Phantasmagoria," I think—which appeared in gilt letters on the gate-post.

There is nothing like proceeding with caution: and before I walked up the path I took a survey through the shrubs, feeling rather uncomfortable and guilty, as though

I were planning a burglary, and quite pleased that neither Policeman X nor any other observer was in sight. What I saw was a tennis lawn with two elderly gentlemen upon it engaged in the game. One of these, doubtless, was Mr. Robert Langton, and the other—ah, now I began to understand about Tweedledum and Tweedledee—was his exact counterpart. Which was Robert and which was George I did not know, but the nose of one was somewhat redder than the nose of the other. I decided that George was the man of the excess of colour. Perhaps I did so—who can tell?—because my explanations were to be made to Robert, and a red nose sometimes means temper.

Both the old gentlemen were dressed in flannels, and being of stout, short build, the exertion of the game—the rushing to and fro, the scoring, the disputations, last and least the batting of the balls—caused them to puff and gasp a good deal. They pursued their game, however, with immense vigour and without a pause.

Which was just where my difficulty came in. Of course I saw at once the immense advantage of explaining such business as mine to a man in flannels, whereas I was dressed in immaculate black clothes, especially when my news might make him angry. He would be simply nowhere as regards the amount of dignity he could command. I had been fearful of finding Mr. Langton in broadcloth, sitting up in his library like a Lord Chief Justice. I was not going to miss such an opportunity as this. I would say my say out here in the garden.

Unfortunately the game went on without intermission. I stood glaring through the shrubs for I know not how long, waiting for the combatants to propose an armistice, sink down upon the garden seat, and mop their heated brows with their handkerchiefs; that would have been my time. But no. They played as though their lives depended upon it, and I was in despair.

Suddenly the "casus belli" arose through the action of a third party. This was a small boy of great depravity and of predatory instincts. There can be no doubt that he had crept into the garden under cover of the shrubs before my arrival, and having grabbed the flowers he was after, had caught sight of me watching on the outskirts, and dared not rush forth. Doubtless he thought I was inspecting him all the while.

He would appear, however, to have got as tired of waiting as I did, for he must have suddenly made up his mind to run for it. The fates were against him. As he made his sortie, both I and one of the old gentlemen caught sight of him simultaneously.

The tennis-player threw down his racquet and roared "Stop thief!" while I, turning in at the gate, was just in time to catch the culprit. The boy struggled, then burst out blubbing, cast his geraniums to the ground, and gave himself up for lost.

I led him in triumph up to the master of the house—who was he of the red nose, after all, so that I was disappointed—and felt that I had accomplished my own introduction capitally. We all three admonished the boy, waved a possible police station and attendant horrors before his terrified gaze, and prophesied gallows generally. The prisoner wept piteously, but preserved his presence of mind sufficiently to give a wrong name and address—as was subsequently discovered. We decided to leave the question of his reform to his own conscience, and so dismissed him. I have reason to believe that his tears were speedily dried, and that he regained his usual health and spirits pretty promptly, for I could almost make affidavit that it was that very boy who nearly put out my eye with a tip-cat when I was going home.

The "juvenile offender" being disposed of, I introduced myself as Jameson's friend, and, quaking, prepared to enter upon the subject which had brought me into Mr. Robert Langton's presence. The nearer I got to it the less I liked it. What was Mr. Robert saying?

"Now that that young ruffian has been the means of giving us the pleasure of making your acquaintance, we shall hope," etc., etc.

Then the temptation came upon me—why say any more? My presence is evidently sufficiently explained, and really Jameson did not do the right thing in leaving me to come here by myself.

I said I was only too happy—and had an engagement—and—and must go.

"Wait a bit," said Mr. Robert heartily. "Here's Jameson with my daughter."

I looked up towards the house, and there, sure enough, I saw my friend coming down the steps with such a charming girl that I quite envied him. But what in the world did the wretch—i.e., my friend, not Miss Frida—mean by his presence there?

It was Mr. George—he of Leamington—who enlightened me. He chuckled, winked mysteriously, and whispered:

"They're just engaged; you must congratulate 'em. We've all done it."

That miserable Jameson had actually come down early; had explained everything—just in time to prevent Mr. George from committing an assault and battery upon the person of the editor of the "New Gazette," for which ostensible purpose he had come to London—and had finally been forgiven, and received as a son-in-law "in spe." He had given me all that trouble for nothing. That is just the way friends serve you. Never trust a man who's in love.

STREET ACCIDENTS.

As the vessel that is continually taken to the well is sure to be broken at last, so with most people who go to and fro among the crowded streets of our large cities there arrives sooner or later the experience of a street accident. However sharp-sighted you may be, however nimble, there is your fate lurking for you at some street corner, or, more probably, at some street crossing. There the accident is waiting for you, something mild it is to be hoped—nothing worse than a sprain or a bruise in its result, and although it may involve a good deal of loss or suffering to the victim, with that it ends, and does not even find its way as a statistical unit into the annual report of the Chief Commissioner of Police. For with most sufferers their chief anxiety is to escape from public attention, and, like the wounded beast, to carry their hurts to their own particular den, while, in a general way, the notion of obtaining any compensation for their injuries must be dismissed as out of the question. It was Lord Westbury, that balefully brilliant Lord Chancellor, who, when his horses ran away in a crowded thoroughfare, pleasantly adjured his coachman, "Charles, pick out something cheap," an injunction which Charles obeyed with equal sangfroid by smashing into a manure cart. But it is a different matter to be oneself run down by "something cheap," though, indeed, whatever the position of the owner of the vehicle that knocks you over, unless the driver is very flagrantly breaking the rules of the road, there is very little prospect of getting any satisfaction.

Let us say that it is a hansom cab

that, rushing round a corner, immolates an unlucky foot-passenger; will the driver pull up and await identification as the author of the catastrophe? He may if there is a policeman there to stop him, and in that case the policeman will take down the number of the cab and the number of the driver's license. In this case we will suppose that there are witnesses to the fact of the furious driving, and that it turns out that the proprietor of the cab, who has been readily found from the police register, is a man of substance. Yet it would be rash to suppose that the sufferer's process will necessarily be successful. That particular cab might be proved to have been in quite another part of the town, and with a driver of a different number altogether. No! we may leave alone these light Cossacks of the streets. It is the heavy vanner who ought to be the most careful, for he is more easily caught and brought to book. As an example of this may be recorded the experiences of a lady revealed to the present writer as he was losing his time within the precincts of the Law Courts. Mrs. A—— was knocked down by a van crossing the footpath from a "porte cochère"; she was laid up for three months, at the end of which time she was able to go in a cab to see her lawyers about the accident. In returning to her home her cab was run into by another heavy van, when she was struck by the pole of the vehicle, and afterwards carried insensible to the hospital. She recovered substantial damages in both cases, although they were contested with determination; but it required an exceptional woman to go through the ordeal of being fought over by half-a-dozen medical specialists.

But it is with the social and not the legal aspect of street accidents that we have to concern ourselves. The safety of street travelling everybody is interested in, for it concerns probably all the members of the household, and especially in London. In the morning its inmates separate gaily enough, they disappear, some of them, in the great wilderness of London, the huge city with its labyrinths and pitfalls, its prowling robbers and stealthy assassins, its great roaring palpitating mass, out of which people draw their daily bread as out of a myriad-mouthed furnace. Meantime the house at home goes on its quiet daily track, and one by one the inmates reappear. And so it goes on till one day perhaps some one goes out who does not return. Then follow weary hours, perhaps

days of torturing suspense, while the fate of one beloved is hidden in the profoundest mystery, not the least happy solution of which, perhaps, is a notice from such a hospital that such a one has been brought there seriously injured by a street accident. Should it happen that there was no certain indication about the sufferer of name and address, the period of suspense may be indefinitely prolonged. So that among the minor duties of life it may be said that one not immaterial is to go about provided with some unmistakable means of identification; such as German soldiers carry in a tablet, like a locket, suspended round the neck.

The chances of receiving injury in a street accident are not so remote as might be imagined—and in London especially, with increased and more rapid movement of vehicles, and greater throng and hurrying to and fro of multitudes, the number of accidents increases in an alarming ratio. Already the quota of accidents to life or limb occurring in the streets of the Metropolitan Police area far outnumber the accidents to passengers travelling over the whole of the immense network of railways of the United Kingdom. The Board of Trade Reports for the year 1890 show the number of accidents to railway passengers as one hundred and eighteen killed and one thousand three hundred and sixty-one injured; while the last annual report of the Chief Commissioner of Metropolitan Police gives a total of street accidents for the year 1891 of one hundred and forty-seven "killed in the streets," and five thousand six hundred and thirty-seven persons "maimed or injured in the streets." Although the percentage of killed to wounded may seem happily small in the latter case, yet it must be remembered that the ultimately fatal results of accidents would not be included in the police return of "killed," which means killed on the spot, and while railway accidents of the slightest character are sure to be reported, many accidents escape altogether the knowledge of the police.

That the risk of street accidents is an increasing one is evident also from a comparison with the returns of former years. In 1881, with a population in the metropolitan area of, roughly, four millions seven hundred and sixty thousand, one hundred and twenty-seven persons were killed, and three thousand four hundred

wounded in the streets. Comparing these casualties with the totals given above, and bearing in mind the increased population of, roughly, five million six hundred and thirty thousand, as shown by the last Census returns, it will be seen that while the population has increased by little more than eighteen per cent., the number of casualties shows an increase of over sixty-five per cent. To this alarming increase of street accidents many causes have contributed. The extensive repairing of the streets with wood and asphalt makes them, if far pleasanter, yet still more dangerous for the pedestrian, to say nothing about the poor horses who suffer and perish unheeded. With a sharp frost, or after a gentle rain, the streets form one prolonged glissade, along which horses are slipping and aliding, and continually falling, and where the foot-passenger ventures at imminent risk to life or limb.

As might be expected, our friend the Cossack, perched upon his handsome and driving like Jehu, anyhow with all his might, is one of the chief enemies of the pedestrian. He is responsible, taking the police returns for 1891 as a guide, for some eleven hundred out of the five thousand odd of the year's casualties. Even more deadly, however, is the light cart of commerce, the butchers, bakers, green-grocers, all the light transport, in fact, of the London commissariat. This flying brigade is responsible for nearly thirteen hundred of the yearly accidents. Next to these, if paraded in order of demerit, comes the heavy van, of which many hundreds turn out every day, their drivers looking out for jobs at docks and wharves and markets, and wherever there is a chance of getting a load. As their earnings depend on the celerity with which they can renew their loads, naturally they do not lose time on the way. Add to these the railway and carriers' vans that dash through the streets at full speed as night comes on, and luggage trains are being made up and loaded with bales and crates and packages innumerable. The heavy goods van, avoiding the busy thoroughfares and passing through the poorer quarters of the town, is especially deadly to the children who make the streets their playground, and to the swarms who, on their way to or from the Board School, dart joyously among the traffic and hang on jubilantly to passing vehicles. Vans score over eight hundred casualties during the year, and if we take

covered vehicles of the same class we may add six hundred more.

Omnibuses and trams together come a long way after these, with a low score, considering the numbers they carry, of about five hundred; and broughams and private carriages are credited with over four hundred accidents. Next to these comes in the cycle, with exactly three hundred and thirty-seven sufferers, of whom it is, however, only fair to suppose that the cyclists themselves formed a considerable part. For one melancholy satisfaction in being run over by a cycle is the consideration that the executioner probably suffers as much as his victim. But the above total is significant when compared with that of ten years previously, when only thirty-seven accidents were reported, and shows how the cycle is establishing itself as a regular component of the crowded traffic of the streets of London.

But it is satisfactory to find that although the number of sufferers by street accidents has largely increased, the means of affording them early attention and medical aid have not been lost sight of. The Society of St. John, whose head-quarters are in Norfolk Street, has done much in the way of training young people in ambulance work, and in affording "first aid" to the injured, and it appears from a recent report that over twelve thousand persons have attended the Society's classes, and acquired some knowledge of the treatment of accident cases. Many of the police, too, have gone through a similar course, and are able to give skilful aid to the wounded. But the chief agent in providing material aid to the sufferers is the "Street Ambulance Branch" of the "Hospital Association," which is supported entirely by voluntary contributions, and which mainly owes its existence to the munificence of a London merchant. There are now about fifty ambulance stations in the metropolis, with the means of conveying sufferers to the nearest hospital. The sum of about a hundred pounds will start a new street station in any part of the metropolis, and for those who have found wealth and honour in the midst of the traffic and turmoil of the great city, no better thank-offering could be devised.

This last Society has a room at Norfolk House, Norfolk Street, in the same premises where the Ambulance Department of the Metropolitan Asylums Board has its offices. This is a municipal organisation, with very

perfect and extensive means at its command. It is in telegraphic and telephonic communication with every part of London, and has well-equipped ambulance stations in every quarter of the metropolis. But its action is restricted entirely to cases of infectious disorders. The machinery is there, fully capable of dealing with every kind of casualty, epileptic fits, sudden illness in the streets, as well as every description of accident; but owing to the curious limitations and divisions which still prevail in the local government of the metropolis, the usefulness of this really fine and well-ordered staff is confined entirely to cases of infection. Public opinion would require that a different class of vehicle should be used for non-infectious cases, although the ambulances are so thoroughly disinfected after each case that there would be little real danger in their use. But with a considerable outward difference in the two classes of ambulances all mistrust would be allayed, and we should have a well-equipped ambulance at call in any part of London, and for any emergency. And that is a service that is due to the citizens of such a municipality as that of Greater London.

But, after all, better than all the cares that can be lavished upon one when injured, is it to be saved from injury altogether. It is not of free choice that we rush in among the hurly-burly of vehicles, among the cries and confusion and bewildering turmoil of a great crossing. The old lady wants her dividends from Threadneedle Street, and must needs hobble through that whirling maelstrom of traffic. Yet, perhaps, this particular carrefour, although the busiest in the world, is not the most dangerous, or anyhow its dangers are well known, and our old lady is prudent enough to wait for convoy. A policeman spreads his arms—those City police are especially the friends of the weak and aged—the traffic is stopped on either side, and a little knot of people hurry between. It reminds the old lady of the prints she used to admire in her youth, where the Red Sea is piled up on either hand, and no sooner is she safe on the refuge, than Pharoah and his hosts stream past with a vengeance. But young Brown, the bank clerk, who has to reach the clearing house in three minutes, dives in and out among the horses' heads, and gets off with a few contusions.

There are the old pensioners, too, who resort to the city once a quarter to visit

the hall of their company to receive their allowance, to drink a glass of wine with the clerk, and crack a good old joke or two with the beadle, and who would not for worlds miss any item of the programme. What Providence is it that watches over these poor infirm creatures in the swirl of all this bustle? But they rarely come to harm, while the poor old colonel who draws his half-pay at Whitehall is knocked over at the foot of King Charles's Statue. Or it is an M.P., perhaps, too intent on his coming effort to catch the Speaker's eye, who falls a victim between Abbey and Palace, or a tramp, with the dust of the country on his ragged garments, who falls a victim by Whitechapel Cross. But of whatever rank, or age, or sex the victims may be, it is clear that they only get in the way of hoofs and wheels out of necessity, and that if a means of crossing without danger were provided, the majority of rational people would avail themselves of the chance.

Another thought is suggested by the aspect of a crowded London crossing. Great as is the confusion of the noisy traffic on the surface, greater still, perhaps, is that of the silent traffic below—the network of wires, telegraph and telephone, public and private; of pipes of all kinds: sewers, gas, hydraulic power, water of sorts, to say nothing of pneumatic tubes and other contrivances, each set under the control of a different authority, with a special excavation required and a general diversion of traffic whenever anything goes wrong. We are told that a general system of subways is impracticable; but there is nothing impracticable in constructing subways round all the principal crossings, where wires and pipes as well as traffic are most congested. It would be no great engineering feat to make such a tunnel, without disturbing the surface, where pipes and wires would pass without confusion, accessible at all times for repairs, while the public, passing through a well-lighted corridor supplied with direction tablets showing the opening to each particular street, would go about its business with increased rapidity and in complete security from a street accident.

The alternative plan of bridging over the crossings with light iron bridges has none of these advantages, and indeed as they must be made of considerable height to clear the tops of loaded vans and other tall vehicles, most people would prefer to face the dangers of the street rather than the fatigue of the getting upstairs. It is much

the same at railway stations. Many of us will risk our lives in crossing the line rather than climb an elevated bridge; but a subway draws us in as a flush of water is drawn in by a gutter. And the plan of subways under crossings is one that grows upon the mind the more it is contemplated. They would be rather subterranean halls than tunnels, with conveniences of all kinds, shops and stalls perhaps, and places for a "wash and brush up." Overhead we should faintly hear the continuous roar of the myriad chariots of the mighty city, and at the thought of dangers escaped, we should "lift up our hands" and bless the beneficent power—consul or prætor or tribune of the people—who had saved us from the dangers of the street. But perhaps we shall have to wait till the next century for all this.

MARA.

A STORY IN EIGHT CHAPTERS.

CHAPTER V.

DESMOND BLAKE was not mortally, though badly hurt, and his splendid constitution and iron will together soon began to pull him through his illness, though for a few days his life was despaired of. His intense anxiety to be able to work again helped on his recovery, and as soon as the doctor would permit, he began once more to devote himself to the case he was engaged in, more determined than ever that the murderers should not escape him. Three weeks after his disablement the task was accomplished, and Desmond, after the papers had been fairly started on their way to Dublin, lay back on his pillows, and looked with a smile of relief at his wife.

"There! So ends the hardest case I ever got through. And now to get well and go off for a holiday—with you."

Mara looked up from her book, and smiled, too.

"I am glad you've got it done. I am sure you have worked at it much too hard, you wicked boy."

"Well, I shall do no more now. Tell me where we shall go, Mara. I am sure I could travel in about a week."

She hesitated, and slowly a red flush dyed her face as she bent her head over the book in her hand. No wonder! In her pocket lay a letter received that morning, and its last few lines ran thus:

"Mara, I say it, and I mean it; this can go on no longer. I can no longer endure the deceit, the shame, the treachery to a man who was once my friend. Either come to me and let us brave the world openly, or I must go somewhere—anywhere so that I never look on your face again. But this secret deception is more than I can bear. Tell me, Mara, and tell me soon, which it is to be.

"F. WARDEN."

"I—I don't know, dear," she said at last. "Let us wait till you are stronger, and then we will decide. Shall you mind if I go out, Desmond? I should like a ride so much."

"My darling, of course not. You know I like you to go out. I should be an old bear if I always wanted you to dance attendance on me. Will you take Pat?"

"No. Pat bothers me. Now, Desmond, I won't go if Pat is to be sent after me!" she cried, as Desmond looked doubtful.

"Very well," he said; and not long afterwards he watched through the open window his wife ride rapidly along the road as far as he could see her.

Mara rode on fast; her thoughts in a whirl of confusion, from which she vainly tried to extricate them, and for which the letter in her pocket was responsible. What should she do? What had she meant to do when from their first acquaintance she had encouraged Warden in his evident admiration for her? Would he have ever stepped over that narrow, easily crossed boundary that separates platonic friendship from guilty love if she had not stretched out her hand to help him over it? He would have loved her in any case, she told herself; he had loved her in spite of himself from the very first. And then conscience, that conscience which had so seldom troubled Mara, cried out sternly: "You might have stopped that love, and you did not! You did not!"

Should she go to him? It had seemed so easy sometimes, a thing which many people had done, which so many more would do, but somehow now it looked different. She thought of Desmond, of their married life together, of all he had done for her, of all he had given her. And in spite of all she had never loved him; all that she had given him in return had been a pretence of love which would make the blow harder when her treachery came home to him.

Her horse stumbled over a loose stone, and Mara, absorbed as she was, was nearly

pitched from the saddle. She laughed to herself as she gathered the reins together. Well! It was too late to draw back now!

She looked round and recognised that she was a long way from home. Near her was a small village, where she and Pat had once been before. They had stopped then at one of the houses for Mara to get some water. She was thirsty now, and turned her horse to the same house to ask for some, and also to rest.

She sat alone in the low, tiny room where they left her, idly wondering what the life of these poor people could be like, when she suddenly heard her husband's name spoken from the room opposite.

"And suppose Blake has finished the case, and you're too late!" said a voice that sounded to Mara oddly familiar.

"Then we'll kill him all the same," came another voice, with a deep oath that made his unsuspected listener shudder. "But he can't have done it. A man can't do much work with a gun-wound in his side. Curses on the shot! If it had gone to his heart at once we should have been spared to-night's business."

"Will it be to-night?"

Again Mara noticed the voice, and this time knew of what it reminded her. It was like her husband's voice.

"It will. At twelve o'clock. As sure as I am alive, this is the last day Desmond Blake shall live."

"Hush!" said the other, "Walls have ears. Shut the door."

They did so, and Mara heard no more. She sat on mechanically, only one idea clear in her mind. She must get away at once. She saw, as vividly as though it were being acted before her, the awful scene that would come that night. Those men were in desperate earnest; they would kill Desmond, they would kill her—if she was there. Mara shivered in deadly fear. She would not be there! It must be—flight!

The woman of the house entered, and Mara rose calmly.

"I am quite rested now. I want to know where the nearest railway station is."

It was very near, the woman told her; only a few minutes' ride, and she would reach it. The horse was rested and trotted fast, but Mara urged him on almost to a gallop in her terrified impatience. Suppose there was no train to Longford! Suppose it had gone! She could hardly find breath to ask the question of the one porter who came and helped her down from her saddle; but his answer reassured

her. There was a train in a few minutes, and she could reach Longford about two o'clock in the afternoon.

"And what's to be done with the horse?" the man asked, bewildered at the number of questions that she showered upon him in her agitation.

"I will write you down where he is to sent," she said, taking out a pocket-book. "If you will take him, I will give you five shillings. Will you?"

The porter signified eagerly that he could, and Mara dropped the money into his hand. A few minutes later she was seated alone in a railway carriage, speeding far away—away from her honour, away from the husband whom she might have saved by a timely warning from the fate which lay before him, but to whom she had hardly given a thought in her selfishness and cowardly fear. The time came soon enough when Mara would have given even that life which was so precious to her to have this day over again, and to act it differently.

It was a quarter past two as the train drew up at Longford Station, and Mara found herself on the old familiar platform. She had drawn a thick veil over her face, and the porters, as she passed quickly by them, did not recognise her. Warden's house was near the station, and gathering up her habit, she walked on towards it.

Into the garden that she and its owner had so often walked in, round to a little side path that had a glass door opening into his library. Would he be there? She reached the door—yes, writing at the table, his back turned to her, sat her lover. A touch of her shaking hand on the handle, Warden turned round, and, with a spring, gained the door and flung it open.

"My darling! Is this your answer? And I never knew you were coming!"

But no answer came. She had fainted in his arms.

"It is nothing," she declared a few minutes later. "Don't be alarmed, Frank."

"I can hardly believe my eyes. Are you, Mara, my own at last, and am I sane and sober? Mara, tell me how you have come; why you did not let me know?"

"I could not. Oh, Frank, I have been so frightened. I am still. I can't get over it. I thought I should have died until I decided to come to you. Frank, you must take me away from Ireland."

"I will take you anywhere you like, my darling. But tell me what has been the matter? He—Blake—has not found out?"

"Oh, no!" said Mara. "He has never guessed. But, oh, Frank, those men are going to attack our house to-night. They mean to kill Desmond, and they would have killed me if I had not come away."

"Kill Blake! What do you mean?" cried Warden.

And Mara told him all—how she had found out that awful secret; her fear for herself; her final flight from her husband.

Warden listened in silence till she had finished.

"But, Mara, you went home first? You gave him warning?"

"Frank, how could I go home?" cried Mara reproachfully.

"Then you sent a message, Mara," he cried, starting up and speaking hoarsely. "Don't, for Heaven's sake, tell me that you came away here to me without telling any one of what you had heard!"

"But how could I have sent a message? I had only just time to catch my train. Oh, Frank, how strange you are! I thought you would be so glad to see me."

Warden rose from his chair and stood before her, looking down almost in horror on her lovely, beseeching face.

"You are the most heartless woman on the face of this earth," he said slowly and deliberately. "Mara, if any one had told me this story of the worst woman in the world, I should hardly have believed it. You have come away and left that poor fellow, wounded as he is, to his fate, when, had you given warning, he might have been protected by all the constabulary in Kerry by night. And he is your husband. It is too awful! What are you made of, that you could have done such a thing as this?"

Mara was gazing up at him, her large eyes distended with uncomprehending fear.

"Frank," she whispered, "what are you saying? Are you joking, Frank, or mad? I am afraid of you."

"I am not mad any more," said Warden gravely. "I have been mad for the last two months, ever since I saw you, but that is over now. You have sobered me yourself, Mara, and the old madness, when I believed you everything that I must love, can never come back again. Now listen. You will go home to your own house, or rather I shall take you there, and you must stay quietly till I come back to you, as I shall do. It may be to-morrow, it may not be for a few days. Tell no one the truth about your sudden return, Mara. You must tell the servants some lie—what

does it matter what!—to explain it. And meanwhile——"

"And meanwhile?" she gasped. "You—what are you going to do?"

"I am going to your husband," said Warden calmly, beginning to put away in his desk the papers he had been engaged on.

"To Desmond! Why? What shall you do? What shall you say to him? Oh, Frank!" and she rose from the chair and threw herself in Warden's arms; "forgive me! forgive me! I never thought of him; I only thought of you. Can you blame me for loving you too well?"

His face grew white as death as he gently put her away from him. Even now, when he knew her as she was, the passionate love which had cost him so much was crying out to him to forgive her, to take her back to her old place in his heart.

It was this woman's fate to be loved, "not wisely, but too well." The thought crossed Warden's mind then that she was rightly named "Mara." Had she not brought the bitterness of soul that is worse than death to all who loved her?

"It is no use," he said sadly. "This is the end of all, Mara, the end. Would to Heaven I could die with it! I can say no more. Let me go. I am going to try and save him. Even now I may be in time."

In vain were Mara's tears, in vain her prayers for forgiveness, her entreaties for his love. She knew as he left her that this was indeed the end of all.

CHAPTER VI.

THE sun had set, and dusk was coming on fast, as Warden walked rapidly through the little Kerry village in search of Desmond Blake's house. He found it without difficulty, and in answer to his knock Pat came to the door.

"So it's you!" he said, with a scowl of dislike. Servants are proverbially more far-seeing than their masters, and though Desmond had no suspicion of his wife's flirtation with Warden, Pat knew it well.

Warden came into the hall, shut the door, and drew Pat by the arm into the nearest room.

"Now look here, Pat," he said firmly, "you dislike me, and you've got good reason, too, for you're a true friend to your master; but for his sake you'll trust me now. These men who did their best to kill him three weeks ago mean to try it again, and they don't want to fail a second time. They are coming here to-night,

and you know best whether you're ready for them or not."

He waited for an answer; but Pat was looking at him in breathless silence, and he went on:

"You must go at once to the barracks, and tell them what I have told you. All the available men must come here, and as soon as possible, for at what time this attack is to be made I don't know."

"They've chosen their day well, anyhow," said Pat grimly. "There's half the men in barracks gone to-day to Trales. If we'd only known this morning, we could have kept some of them here. Oh, Mr. Warden, sir, and there's the master ill already! They'll be the end of him this time."

Warden ground his teeth. "Not if we can help it! Go, there's no time to lose."

"I will, sir. How did you hear it, sir?"

"Never mind how I heard it. Where is your master? I will tell him of this—and other things, if you'll show me his room."

"One word, sir! The mistress? Master's half wild about her, she hasn't come home yet! Do you know anything?"

"I do. She is safe. Can't you go at once, man, or must I myself?"

Suddenly Desmond's voice came shouting from upstairs. "Pat, who is that at the door? Didn't I tell you to let me know at once?"

"You did, sir. It's all right, sir," called Pat, and the next moment he was on his way to the barracks; while Warden slowly went upstairs, feeling that there was not a man in the world with whom he would not gladly change places at this moment.

Desmond started up in utter surprise as he entered the room. "Warden! What brings you here, of all men?"

"I've come to see you," said Warden gravely, as he shut the door and sat down near the bed. "No, I can't shake hands, Blake. You'll know why, presently."

"In Heaven's name, why not? Warden, I hardly know where I am, or what I am doing. I'm mad with anxiety about my wife. She——"

"Your wife is safe. It is about her partly that I have come to speak to you."

"Safe! Thank Heaven! But what do you know of her? Tell me where she is! You met her? You have seen her?"

"I have just come from her. Blake," he went on, leaning one arm on the bed, and shielding his face with his hand, "I don't know how to tell you. It's a long story, but I can't go through the whole of it. I must blurt it out! I love your wife, and she fled to me to-day to Longford!"

There was a long silence, and the heavy beats of each man's heart could almost be heard in the unnatural stillness. Then Desmond found his voice.

"You infernal scoundrel! How dare you come to me, and tell me that lie? Oh, if I were a man, just for one hour again, instead of a useless log!"

"I am an infernal scoundrel!" said Warden. "I've behaved like a black-guard to you, Blake, but there's worse I've got to tell you."

"Worse!" echoed Desmond. "Man, do you know what my wife was to me, that you can say there is anything worse than—that? But it's a lie! Oh, Heaven, I know it's a lie! She couldn't do it! Liar! Scoundrel! What fiend inspired you to come to me with such a fool's tale as that?" He paused for a moment to collect his thoughts, to try and realise the full meaning of what had been told him. Could it be true? Something in Warden's attitude, the expression on his down-bent face, brought the truth home to him. There was a long silence, and at last Desmond spoke quietly: "You said there was worse to tell me. Let me hear it."

Warden drew his breath hard. How was he to tell the extent of heartlessness that Mara had shown?

"The other thing that I came to tell you is, that these men who had a try for your life when you were wounded will come here to-night. They mean to have your life if they can. I have done all I could. Pat has now gone to get together all the men possible."

Desmond was looking at him calmly; he hardly seemed to have heard the danger that threatened him.

"Coming to-night!" he said. "How did you find out?" he asked sharply.

"Don't ask me how I found it out!" cried Warden, rising from his chair and speaking passionately. "I can't tell you how I found it out. But it is true, I believe. Oh, Blake," he went on, coming closer up to him, "I've behaved shamefully to you, I've deceived you, and betrayed you, but I would give my life now, if it were possible, to save you from this."

"Sit down!" said Desmond sternly.

"Do you think I care for my life without—her? Do you think anything else matters one straw when all I can think of is that she has gone from me? Let the brutes come, let them kill me if they will! Yes, I do believe you, Warden. I do believe that you would save me now if you could."

But how did you find this out? I must know. I will know!"

"I can't tell you," repeated Warden.

"You shall tell me. Stay," he cried, and then stopped short, and looked at the other with an agony of apprehension in his face. "Great Heavens! She did not know. She did not leave me here to die with no warning to prepare when she knew. Warden, tell me, she did not?"

Warden did not answer. His face was hidden in his hands, but Desmond knew by his silence that he had guessed rightly. Into those few moments that followed seemed to be compressed the sorrow and suffering of a lifetime. Disillusionment comes to most of us, though in the generality of cases we awake to it gradually, and the pain of it is dulled; but to Desmond it had come suddenly and completely—the end of all love, all hope, all interest.

"I understand now," he said presently.

"And how did Mara know of it?"

"She overheard it," said Warden.

"Yes, and then she took the first train to Longford, I suppose. Is she there now?"

"She is in her own house," Warden answered in the same dull, mechanical tone as before.

"What time is it?" Desmond asked.

"Nine o'clock."

"And when is this attack to come off? Do you know?"

"I don't know precisely. I believe about midnight."

"Then we have time yet. Warden, are you going back now—to her?"

"No; I am going to stay here. If you turn me out of doors, I'll fight those blackguards on the doorstep. It's the only reparation I can make to you."

Desmond looked at him for a moment half doubtfully.

"I ought to thank you," he said. "I do thank you. Warden, you have behaved badly to me. If I could have killed you a short time ago I should have done it; but you've acted like a man now, and I respect you for it."

The young man raised his head, and for the first time looked the other in the face.

"Thank you for saying that. Some day, perhaps, I shall begin to respect myself again."

"You said you loved her," Desmond went on. "Does she love you?"

"She said she did, but—Blake, for Heaven's sake say no more!"

"I hear Pat at the door. Will you leave me now, and at ten o'clock send him to me? I can't get up alone, I'm afraid."

Warden started in amazement.

"Get up! What on earth are you thinking of? You must do no such thing!"

"You don't imagine that I'm going to stay here and let you brave fellows fight my battles, do you?" said Desmond. "I shall get up, of course, and meet them; shall tell them that they are too late, for the papers are gone. Then they may kill me if they like; what does it matter?"

"Blake, don't do it!" said Warden earnestly. "Even if you don't care for your life, you've no right to fling it away."

Desmond shook his head.

"Do you think I could lie here and let you fight for me? It's no use, Warden, I couldn't do it. I must face them myself. And, after all, I'm not so weak as you think. My arm is strong enough still. Now go, I want to be alone for a time. Barricade all the doors and windows so that they can't sneak in without our knowing."

Warden promised, and went away with a heavy heart. Well did he know that the man who had once been his friend, and whom now he would have died to serve, would never come out of this fight alive!

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MISS LATIMER OF BRYANS.

By ELEANOR C. PRICE.

Author of "Alexia," "Red Towers," "The Little One," etc.

CHAPTER XXVI. AN ENGAGEMENT.

AFTER nearly forty-eight hours of misery which seemed to grow deeper, more frightening, more bewildering every hour, Maggie was sitting alone in the dark, melancholy little room she called the drawing-room. Her grandfather had been very cross all day, and she had taken refuge from him here. The old man, in fact, was troubled by her unhappy looks, and thoroughly puzzled as to what to do with her. He was anxious, and his anxiety took the form of impatient anger. It seemed to make life a little harder still for Maggie, who honestly thought herself now the most miserable girl in the whole world.

On both these days she had stayed indoors, fearing to meet Arthur Nugent, fearing still more to meet Poppy. Nobody had come to the house. Arthur certainly had made no attempt to see her, and she was left alone with her own thoughts, which were full of remorse and terror. Maggie was not a bad girl. Her love for Poppy had till now been the most real thing in her life. Now she seemed to be only part—the worst part—of a cruel fate which was spoiling Maggie's life. If only she did not exist! If only Arthur were free! But Maggie did not deceive herself with any faint idea of such a possibility. She had character enough to look the thing in the face, and one result of those hours had been a firm resolve never to speak to Arthur again.

It was impossible not to think of him, however. Fate was cruel, but he loved her. It was Maggie's first experience, and she did not for a moment doubt that Arthur loved her, and was just as unhappy as herself. Poppy, of course, would never know, "and as for us, we must live it down," thought Maggie. She had met with the expression somewhere, and found it rather grand and satisfying. But living anything down is a sad business for a girl shut up in a lonely house with a cranky old grandfather. And Maggie was not at all sure that Arthur would feel things as she did. He might expect something to happen; surely, indeed, he must. But what could happen, unless Poppy knew? And then Poppy would break her heart, for she certainly loved Arthur.

All these thoughts, and many that were even more distracting, chased each other through the poor brain as those two long nights and days ran their course. Maggie cried a good deal, and looked sadly at herself in the glass, thinking that she would soon be quite ugly with crying, and that then Arthur would not even want to see her any more. With all her good resolutions, all her remorse for those few minutes in the lane, she wondered with longing in the depth of her heart why he did not manage to come, or write, or by some means send some kind of message.

Then again, when those minutes had been lived through once more, came the terror, the shrinking, that followed them, and the consciousness that never before had she done anything really wicked, really to be ashamed of, anything which altered life and could not be undone. The princess in her tower, as Poppy used to call her, had been rescued; but only to be bound in a worse captivity. For there

was no way at all, it seemed to Maggie, out of this new and hopeless state of things.

Now the fire was nearly out, and it was almost dusk in the gloomy little room, darkened by its own draperies, and by the garden walls which shadowed it from outside. When Maggie heard a man's step coming along the passage, she started from her chair into the middle of the room. How could he dare! Then the maid opened the door and Geoffrey Thorne walked in.

At the first moment Maggie had not a word to say. She gave him her hand almost in silence, and his own being as cold as ice, it felt to him like a burning coal.

"Grandfather will be glad," she said, turning away to the fire. "He was asleep—but we will go to him soon. I was thinking of something else, I suppose, for I have let the fire out. Perhaps he is awake now, though—and it is nearly tea-time."

Her voice was always pathetic, but to-day it seemed doubly so, with a little hurry, a little uncertainty, in its soft, musical tones.

"May we not stay here a little?" asked Geoffrey. "Don't disturb him till you must."

"Very well," said Maggie.

She did not care. Half an hour more or less made no difference to her. She stooped over the fire and lighted two candles on the mantelpiece. Then she sat down opposite to Geoffrey, still stooping a little towards the fire, so that her face was partly in shadow, and stretching out her hands as if they were cold.

As Geoffrey saw her face, it had all the delicate refinement suggested in his portrait of her, and, indeed, more still. The cheek was a little thinner in its soft outline, and flushed with pink colour; the large dark eyes were more tired, more expressive, the hair curled more softly over the low white brow. What he was doing was all for his queen and empress, Porphyria; but no soft-hearted, imaginative, artistic man could look at this girl without admiration and interest, if not very real sympathy. It could not be denied that she looked extremely sad; that she was very much changed from the girl whose portrait he had begun a few weeks before. He liked Maggie; even in those first days he had found her attractive, though the thought of marrying her had never seriously crossed his mind till Lucy's careless speech that morning. He had not the smallest wish

to marry anybody; but this had come upon him almost as a necessity. He felt and knew that it would please every one, except poor Lucy herself, perhaps. Even the Rector would be glad, though he remonstrated; and it had been Miss Latimer's wish for months.

Yes, that explained everything; her asking him to go to England, her commission to do Maggie's portrait, her objection to a winter in Spain—everything. The thought hurt and wounded Geoffrey to the very centre. All her kindness was because she thought he would be a good match for her friend. He and this girl might be called equals, they would take each other off her hands. The consciousness of all this would have been enough to send Geoffrey off to Spain, instead of bringing him to Church Corner, if he had not seen the queen of his thoughts compassed round with dangers of which she knew nothing, and which a few words from him might perhaps remove for ever. It was a struggle between pride and love, but love conquered, for Geoffrey was well provided with that old-fashioned quality, romance. The realisation of Porphyria's plans for him was pain—almost greater pain, perhaps, than the news of her engagement had been—but it did not for a moment affect his loyalty. He must be her servant still, her faithful dog. In other times he would have been ready to "put his breast against the spears" for her. In these more civilised days he would do anything to please her, and would make any sacrifice to take a possible danger out of her life. If it could be true that Arthur Nugent had lost his senses so far, he would have to regain them now, and quickly.

Geoffrey did not think all this out; he was hardly conscious of his motives, and he had had no time to consider more sides of the question than one—to ask himself, for instance, whether the marriage of such a man with Poppy had not better have been stopped than forwarded. The Rector might have said so, but he had not consulted him. It would have been better after all to bother him, to trust him entirely. As it was, Geoffrey behaved like a very short-sighted hero, only aiming at what would stop any disturbance of his lady's present happiness.

As he sat looking at Maggie in the dim light, his resolution underwent no change, though it became more difficult, and though the more he realised her as a

living woman, the more doubtful he felt of her answer to what he was going to say.

In the meanwhile she had begun to talk, and Geoffrey found himself giving extremely absent and stupid answers to commonplace chatter, which only her face and voice made interesting. At last, by saying something quite meaningless and at cross purposes, he succeeded to his own surprise in making the girl laugh. It was rather a perilous laugh, ending in something not unlike a sob; but Geoffrey hardly knew that, though something in its tone touched him so oddly that he could not laugh too.

"Mr. Thorne," she said, recovering herself, "do you know that you are very funny? What is the matter with you to-day?"

"I have got something on my mind," said Geoffrey. "Don't you know that feeling?"

He got up and stood on the hearthrug, looking down at her with thoughtful eyes.

She did not speak for a moment. Did she know that feeling? Ah, but nothing of such a truth was going to be betrayed to him, good kind fellow as she felt him to be. Much better to make him talk about himself; her knowledges and feelings were no affair of his.

"Well, take it off your mind. Tell me all about it," she said suddenly. "Then you will be able to talk like other people."

She looked up with a pretty smile, seeming for the moment to have forgotten her sadness.

"If I were to take you at your word—" murmured Geoffrey.

"Well, do; only don't make it a very long story, because I hear the tea-things, and we shall have to go into the other room."

"I hardly dare say it; I am afraid you will be angry," he said, after a strange pause, during which her eyes became wide awake with curiosity.

He was asking himself whether he could—whether he really dared—offer his whole self and life to this girl. The question could not be answered; he could only vaguely trust his own intentions, for it was too late to turn back now, or even to stand shivering on the brink.

"I came this afternoon to ask you a question," he said. His voice shook, and was very low; his heart thumped violently. "Do you think—do you like me enough—would you—will you be my wife?"

It was lamely done. He hardly dared look at her, but stared at the floor, ashamed and miserable. He had not, so far, actually told a lie; but it was a terrible business, and Miss Farrant had a perfect right, he felt, to be very angry with him.

She made a little exclamation, "Oh!" and covered her face with her hands. They both remained for a minute silent and motionless. Then Maggie suddenly dropped her hands, rose from her chair, and stood up in front of him.

"You startled me," she said. "Now, will you answer me a question? Answer it truly, like a man. Don't deceive me."

Geoffrey looked at her, and saw that her eyes were wonderfully sweet.

"You are good," she said, "and I trust you to tell me the truth. Is this out of pity? Have you planned this with the Rector, perhaps, because you and he thought that I was a lonely, unhappy girl? I know you saw me the other day when I was waiting for—by the avenue gate. Do you ask me this because you are sorry for me? Now, the truth."

"No," said Geoffrey, still looking at her; "it is not out of pity. It is not because I am sorry for you. Nor have I planned it with the Rector. It is my own wish—please believe that—and if we are both rather lonely, and not specially happy, perhaps, is there any harm in my feeling that?"

He did not and could not give her the best reason, "I love you," and his manner was quiet, almost cold; but in spite of himself, meeting the girl's wistful eyes, he took one of those hot little hands between his own, and stood holding it.

In the meanwhile she was saying to herself: "I should be perfectly safe—perfectly safe. I could do no more harm to anybody. I believe he has been sent from heaven on purpose to save me. And if he wishes it, could it be wrong?"

As the thought of Arthur seized upon her mind, she drove it away with a fury that astonished herself. She looked down at Geoffrey's hands, holding hers; she glanced up, for an instant, into the good dark eyes which were watching her with a kind of patient eagerness, and thought that he was strong, clever, good-looking, that he must love her, that some day she might love him, that her grandfather would be very glad, and more than all, over and over again, "I should never do anything wrong then, never be unhappy, always safe. No one would snub me then,

no one would make me miserable. He would always be good to me."

The last thought made its way somehow into words which just reached Geoffrey's ear: "You would always be good to me."

"As good as I know how," he answered, smiling.

"And you trust me enough?"

It seemed a curious question on a girl's lips, fit to rouse again thoughts, questions, suspicions, which her presence had somehow sent to sleep. For a moment these awakened doubts were shining in Geoffrey's eyes as he gazed at her, and for a moment his whole nature rebelled. What was he doing? If this woman to whom he had offered himself were really in love with another man? The thought was horrible; but then he told himself: "No. There is no deception in this poor child's eyes. Possibly he may have said something foolish; she is unhappy, uneasy, but that is all. I shall be able to keep what belongs to me."

"Why shouldn't I?" he said in answer to Maggie's words; his eyes softened again and the doubts fled.

"But why do you wish it, I wonder?" said Maggie very low. "Do you know that I am not half good enough for you—and—I don't even care——"

"You will, though, won't you, one of these days?"

"I don't know."

"Yes, you will," said Geoffrey, and he gently lifted the little fingers to his lips and kissed them. "Let it be yes! If you will trust yourself to me, I will try to make you happy."

"I know you will," Maggie said, but she drew her hand quickly away. "Look here, shall we think it over? Grandfather is waiting for his tea."

"No; I can't do any more thinking. Say 'yes' to me now."

"You are very impatient," said the girl, lifting her head and looking up almost defiantly. "You must remember that I have had no time to think at all."

Geoffrey had now quietly imprisoned both her hands. He was impatient, for complicated reasons which she was not likely to understand.

"You need not think. You know," he said. "You know if it is to be 'yes' or 'no,' and that is all I want. Tell me."

"Then, if that is all you want, it had better be 'no.'"

A flush rose into Geoffrey's dark face.

He was human, and he did not care to be played with.

"Be in earnest," he said. "You don't mean that."

"Well, this is not fair," said Maggie, with a little soft laugh. "I am in earnest. I am thinking of grandfather's tea."

"Say 'yes' to me, and then we can go and tell him. You don't think he will be angry?"

"No; he will be glad," said Maggie frankly. "Well, if you will be obstinate—I hope you won't repent. I never thought you dreamed of such a thing, do you know——"

She could not say much more, for Geoffrey settled the question by suddenly kissing her. He felt desperate. The girl attracted him, no doubt, as girls had attracted him before; an entirely different and quite inferior kind of feeling from that which drew him to Porphyria. But never before had he felt mysteriously fallen and degraded in his own eyes, as he did in giving Maggie that first kiss. This was a strange sacrifice for Porphyria. Apparently it meant that the lower part of his nature was to be put in authority over the higher, and all to gain some end which perhaps was only a shadow. It was very like doing evil that good might come.

The girl escaped from him instantly, without a word, and walked straight out of the room. He thought she was offended, and his face burned with a sort of fury of shame. Overtaking her instantly in the passage, he said eagerly, in a low voice, and with extreme humility:

"One moment—please forgive me! Have I made you angry?"

Maggie turned round. It was dark in the passage.

"I am not angry," she said, and her voice trembled, "only astonished."

"You told me I was impatient," he said. "Didn't you believe it?"

"You are."

She went on quickly, and said nothing more. He hardly knew what she would do or say when they came into the parlour. He felt that he would not himself dare to speak, and that any communication to her grandfather must entirely depend on her. He was not at all sure that she did not mean to withdraw the consent she had only half given. He was in a whirl of excitement, and tolerably miserable, yet quite sure that he would not give her up, now, without a struggle.

There sat the old white-bearded man in

his chair by the fire. The lamp was lighted, the tea-table was set out in the middle of the room, but the curtains were not drawn, and fading daylight still glimmered outside in the garden.

"Maggie, Maggie!" he cried in querulous tones, "you tiresome little fool, where have you been? Look there now, there's the tea getting cold, and you amusing yourself with some of your fine friends just as if I didn't exist. Well, you'll be free one of these days, my dear, but mind you——"

"Here's a visitor for you," said Maggie quickly.

She walked straight across to the window, and stood there a moment, pressing her forehead against the cool panes. What was in her mind? Was she trying to see down the garden?

The old man welcomed Geoffrey with outstretched hand.

"Glad to see you, Mr. Thorne; but you're quite a stranger," as the poor people say. Well now, and what are you come for? To see me, or to begin another picture, or because you want a cup of tea, or all three together?"

"All three together, and—and——" Geoffrey began, and then, suddenly turning away from the fireplace, he followed Maggie to the window, where she was now drawing the heavy curtains slowly round the bow. "Let me do that," he said. "Tell him!"—and entreatingly.

Maggie did not even look at him in answer, but went immediately across to her grandfather, who was staring at the young man with something in his face which hardly knew whether to be anger or not.

"Mr. Thorne has come to see you, grandfather," said the girl, in the strangest, most careless tone, "because he wants to ask you for something. And he is going to paint lots more pictures, and have hundreds of cups of tea; but not, of course, if you have any objection."

The old man's eyes grew rounder and harder than usual as he listened to Maggie's sweet voice and the odd things it was saying. Even his quick wits were hardly quick enough for her.

"What's the lass talking about?" he muttered.

Then Geoffrey, having finished the curtains, came forward and stood by Maggie, looking hard at her as he spoke.

"Yes, Mr. Farrant, she says I want to ask you for something. So I do—for what you value more than anything else in the world."

"That's a large order," said the old man half to himself. "Well, so you know what you want at last, do you? That's half the battle. And what does Maggie say!—for that's the other half. Do you like him, child? Mind, now, he'll be always painting other people." Maggie bent her head and smiled. "What does your father say, Mr. Artist?"

"He knows nothing yet."

"Well, I must have a talk with him. Tell him I shall be obliged if he will come and see me to-morrow. Now don't stand there, both of you, with nothing to say. Sit down, Maggie, girl, and give us our tea. We shall be better after that. Our nerves are all a little low at present."

He leaned back and watched the two young people with a smile which was really one of extreme contentment, but which looked not unlike acid mockery. Geoffrey felt that it ought to be this, for he deserved it. He felt like a stock or stone, with "nothing to say," as the old man had shrewdly perceived. Maggie, after her first outspoken coolness, had dropped into shyness too, infected by him.

Geoffrey knew that he would be generally considered the happiest of men, engaged to the prettiest girl in the county. He hardly knew whether he was in his senses, but not because he was happy.

Maggie, without looking at him, put five or six lumps of sugar into his tea, and her grandfather watched them both with his sardonic smile. Here, it seemed, was Geoffrey's home, his family, his fate for years to come.

HIS MANY FRIENDS.

WHEN is a play a play? That is one of the questions of the hour. You think the question an easy one? How boundless is your ignorance! And yet I almost fancy that yours is that ignorance which is bliss—in which it is folly to be wise. For, in this matter, the critics are laying down the law, and the more you endeavour to follow its turnings and twistings, as they expound it, the more clearly you will perceive that in that direction madness lies. One of the most disastrous seasons the stage has known was experienced this year. The theatres were empty. The music-halls were crammed to the roofs. People seemed to be turning their backs on their old love, the drama, and taking their money, themselves, and their applause to that

curious hybrid, the "variety" stage. And all the time the critics, who should be our instructors, are tilting at windmills, beating the air. They are suggesting, and more than suggesting, disagreeable things about each other, because they are unable to agree on the first principles of their business, because they are unable to make up their minds as to when a play is a play.

One school of critics maintains that only Heinrich Ibsen and Heinrich Ibsen's imitators can write plays. Another school maintains that Heinrich Ibsen can write anything, and everything, but plays. A short time ago a new drama was produced at the Adelphi—at least it was called a drama on the programme. One set of critics said, in effect, "whatever this thing is, it is not a play." The other set declared, "whatever this thing is not, it is a play." One authority will tell you, by way of instruction, "if you want to know what is a play, study the works of Tom Robertson and H. J. Byron." Another authority will tell you, also by way of instruction, "if you want to know what is not a play, study the works of H. J. Byron and Tom Robertson." Each of these authorities will have his faith so founded on a rock, he will be so positive, and—write it small—so self-satisfied, that you will feel that it is your own fault that you are not more conscious of the value of the information you have received.

Perhaps an unprejudiced outsider, who is not a critic, may be allowed to suggest that both these authorities, though so entirely in opposition, may, if each would only own it of the other, have right upon his side. Even the most complete outsider, who has watched the course of theatrical events during, say, the last twenty years, cannot but feel that the drama is approaching, or, perhaps, is actually passing through, a period of—what shall we say? Revolution would, possibly, be too strong a word. But it is certainly a period of change.

One thing is noticeable: that while one section of the "patrons" of the drama is becoming daily more frivolous, another section is becoming, also daily, more and more in earnest. Some of the older critics seem unable to recognise "pictures from the life" when they see them on the stage. Certainly they resent any attempt to depict real men and women behind the footlights, with a degree of irritability which is, at least, undignified. While, on the other hand, some of the younger critics treat productions which are merely

intended to amuse, in a manner which would almost lead one to suppose that they are of opinion that amusement is the last thing which one ought to expect to find at the theatre. The older men would seem, some of them, to have made up their minds that they will not have a new thing at any price, while the younger men seem equally resolute the other way. Between them, since it is certain that he cannot succeed in pleasing both the houses, the dramatist would seem to be an individual who is blessed with too many friends. And, in the meantime, while the music-halls play, year after year, all the year round, without a single intermission, to crowded audiences, the theatres find it more and more difficult to keep open, under the same management, for six successive months. The weather affects the theatres in the most curious way. Bad weather means bad houses. If there is a spell of hot weather, there is a regular "sauve qui peut" among the managers to be the first to close. Rain or shine, warm weather or cold, these things affect the music-halls not one jot. They care nothing for climatic conditions; they always fill; they never close. It seems unfortunate that the critics—those men of wisdom—instead of quarrelling among themselves as to when a play is a play, do not put their heads together, just for once in a way, and tell the managers how to fill the theatres, if only for a single season, all along the Strand. All these gentlemen are excellent at theory. One would like to see them try their hand at practice, for a change.

Under existing circumstances one cannot but feel that, of his many friends, the dramatist can more than spare one set—his friends the critics. No man shall teach another man how to write a play—that is a play. The playwright must be self-taught. Yet teachers abound. It is possible that he may get good from all of them, except from those men who earn a more or less honest pound by criticising the efforts of those other men who endeavour to earn a precarious livelihood by writing plays. Let there be no mistake. Not because the critics are incapable; still less because they are dishonest. Read all the criticisms of the next play which is produced at a London theatre. You will understand why a dramatist could do very well without his friends the critics.

A play is produced, say, which is the work of a young dramatist. He turns to

the papers to learn what the critics think of it. He finds in paper number one an excellent criticism—excellent! Well written; apparently, well considered. It deals out both praise and blame. The dramatist learns where he has failed, where he has succeeded. He feels grateful. He has learnt something of value. He turns to paper number two. He finds in it another excellent criticism—excellent! It also deals out praises and blame. It also points out where he has failed, and where he has succeeded. But—he turns back to paper number one. Yes, he thought that he had not misread that excellent criticism in paper number one. It actually seems that the critic of paper number two is of opinion that he has failed just where the critic of paper number one is of opinion that he has succeeded, and that—dear me, yes!—that he has succeeded just where the critic of paper number one is of opinion that he has failed. How odd, reflects the dramatist—who must be in possession of abnormal youth—how extremely odd! He turns to paper number three. Paper number three points out, with much frankness and with equal force, that while the work in question may be a tolerable specimen of its class, it is a class which the critic of that paper wishes were dead and done for. It is yet another example of the twaddle and simper school—when shall we see the last of it? A number of lay figures stand in the orthodox positions and deliver the usual lines. Well, perhaps there are still some people who like that kind of thing, and perhaps it is almost as amusing as a wax-work show. Who knows? Still, it is to be regretted that still another person should have arisen who appears not to be possessed of even a rudimentary notion of how to write a play. We have too many “play writers” of that kind already. Because, of course, whatever else this sort of thing is, it is not a play.

If that dramatist were a wise man, at this point he would send the rest of his papers to the butter-shop, and give himself the benefit of a little fresh air. But, instead, he hunts up the critique in paper number four, and finds that he has written the best play which the English stage has seen since the early days of the little house off Tottenham Court Road—now, alas! the critic observes, no more. He has written an honest play. A play to which a decent man can take a decent woman. A play which does not reek of the hospital, but which smells of the cherry

orchards of Kent. The dramatist had no idea that the story of his work was such a pretty story until he read that critic's account of it, nor had he been previously aware that it was quite so namby-pamby. Paper number five observes that the work in question is still another sample of the “nailed together” drama, a miscellaneous farrago of scraps from other men's dramas patched together so as to make an in-harmonious whole; while paper number six remarks that there is something about it so pleasingly fresh and so charmingly original that it appears probable that the coming dramatist has come at last. The dramatist feels that he is beginning to lose his mental equilibrium. If he reads the verdicts of his judges to the bitter end he will lose it altogether. He will find that only on one point do they agree; and that point is, that, with singular unanimity, they agree to differ. No two verdicts are alike. Some are entirely dissimilar. Some agree in some respects, only to differ more strongly in others. There is no one point in the work which they all agree to praise, or which they all agree to blame.

Now you will understand how it is that the dramatist can well afford to do without his friends the critics. If he is a wise man he will not pay the slightest heed to them. They will only bewilder him. And one reason why this is the case consists in the fact that there is no standard of dramatic excellence. Every man—critic or layman—has his own standard. Not only so, each man's own standard alters from day to day. You will soon begin to notice this if you study critical pronouncements. In a sense, it is only natural that this should be so. It is quite conceivable that a man may be in a mood to enjoy a particular kind of play one night, and to execrate it another. Professional critics may not be conscious of this peculiarity of human nature. But the commonplace playgoer is aware that on Tuesday he is all agog for Shakespeare, and that on Tuesday week he is capable of nothing but the “sacred lamp.”

Another reason why the dramatist could afford to do without his many friends, the critics, is because, practically, those gentlemen have no influence with the “paying” play-going public. Some of them may think they have, but there they err. They may have a certain sort of influence in professional or semi-professional circles. But with the public they have none. It

seems odd, but, if you reflect, it is a fact, that all the great theatrical successes of recent years have been damned by, to say the least of it, critical faint praise. Hunt up the contemporary criticisms of Tom Robertson's plays. Some of the journals swear by Robertson now. They swore at him then. When you read what the critics have to say on Mr. David James's latest reappearance as Perkyn Middlewick, you will scarcely believe that the same papers in which those criticisms appeared slated "Our Boys" on its first production. When Mr. Wyndham recently revived "David Garrick" there was a loud shout of critical approbation. When "David Garrick" was first produced, I doubt if a single critic breathed a blessing. It was only long after the public had made up its mind, that the critics could be brought to see anything in "Our American Cousin"—or, for the matter of that, in *Sothern*.

Mr. Irving is an amusing example of the influence which critical pronouncements have upon the public mind. To read some of the criticisms nowadays you would think that the critics had made him. Nowadays, when Mr. Irving gives another Shakespearean revival, there is scarcely a critic who even ventures to hint at the possibility of a shortcoming. Read what the critics had to say when Mr. Irving exchanged melodrama for Shakespeare; it will amuse you. Mr. Irving has not changed in one tittle or one jot. The Irving of yesterday is the Irving of to-day. It is the critics who have changed—as, when, in spite of their anathemas, success attends either a piece or a player, they always do change.

Two amusing, and quite recent, instances occur to one. When "Dorothy" was first produced, it was, according to the critics, dreary stuff. Before it had reached the end of its phenomenal run it had already become one of the most charming, and certainly the brightest, of English operas. Do you remember the reception accorded to "The Private Secretary"? The critics had it that it was something approaching impertinence to produce such trash upon the stage. Already, in the estimation of some of them, it seems to be attaining to the dignity of a classic. Not the least glaring illustration of—what shall we say?—critical conversion has been seen in the case of "H.M.S. Pinafore." I remember what some critics wrote when the piece first saw the light at the Opera Comique, and I remember what those same critics wrote

when the fame of "Pinafore" had bridged the spheres. It is that kind of thing which makes a cynic of a man.

No, it seems to me quite clear that the dramatist, at any rate, could do very well without his friends the critics. They do him no good. They will never teach him how to fill the theatres—never! They will never even help him. Perhaps the public generally could better spare a more useful set of citizens. The plain fact is that, of late, their observations on plays have been more amusing than the plays themselves. If you can believe them, they know so much about the drama, so much more than they care to tell. They know how it is done, how it ought to be done, and how it will be done one of these fine days. For my part, I scarcely ever read a theatrical criticism which did not seem to hint that the critic could have made a much better job of the play than the author had done, if he had only cared to set about it. And I am bound to own that I myself have often sat through plays which I have felt that I could easily have improved upon. After all, critics are but human, though you would not think it when reading some of their lucubrations.

Is there anybody, not connected in some way with "the" profession, who cares one snap of the fingers for what a theatrical critic has to say? Yet theatrical critics occupy more and more space in the papers. This would not be the case if people did not read them. Why do people read what the dramatist's many friends have to say? I read them because I read everything: market reports, police news, advertisements. Why should I leave out the dramatic criticisms? Besides, I read Jones's notice because I anticipate Brown's contradiction of his every word, and Smith's contemptuous disagreement with them both. I am acquainted with a lady who reads Robinson's notices because she assures me that she finds them "absolutely trustworthy." If he snubs a piece she knows that that is just the piece to suit her. She knows that there must be some character about the piece, or else Robinson would be ecstatic. I believe that lady's case to be by no means an uncommon one. Of course, too, some persons read the dramatic notices because they want to know something of a piece, and they think that that is the way in which to find out. In thinking so they are, too often, woefully mistaken. Have you observed

how the dramatic critics in the United States sit in judgement on new plays? They first of all tell you all about the audience. They give you a complete list of the "smart" people who were there. They inform you exactly where they sat, who they talked to, and sometimes what they said, throwing in here and there a few "personal"—amazingly "personal"—"up-to-date" biographical details. They describe the women's clothes at length, and where they got them, and what they paid for them, and so on, for perhaps a column. Then they seem suddenly to remember that there was a play. So they give you vivid descriptions of the scenery, and the mounting, and what the actresses wore, and how the actors looked. And by the time you have reached the end of these notices it is not impossible that you will know exactly what took place in all parts of the theatre except upon the stage. We, in England, have not yet got quite so far as that—they are generally in advance upon the other side—but it undoubtedly is possible, even here, to read all the critics on a new production, and yet when, in your own proper person, you go to see the piece, to find yourself compelled to say, "I had no idea it was that sort of thing at all."

No man has so many friends as the dramatist—and they are such vigorous friends! Every one with whom he comes in contact has, at the very least, sound advice to offer: manager, stage-manager, costumer, scene-painters, scene-shifters, every individual member of his cast. They say that a council of war never fights—there are too many opinions. If dramatists were to listen to, not to speak of acting on, all the advice which they receive, no more plays would ever be written. They receive good-sized volumes of advice before their works are produced. And yet it is only after production that the whole encyclopædia comes. "If Mr. Nailup would only condescend to listen to his critics," writes Robinson in the "Slasher." My dear sir, if Nailup were to listen to his critics, in less than no time he would be in Bedlam. He is, sometimes, more than half-way there already, because, occasionally, he has to listen to advice which is forced upon him by other of his candid friends.

The cloud which hangs over the theatres is but a passing cloud. We have dramatists who, when they are given a free hand, and they are in the mood, can fill them to the roofs—ay, and with delighted crowds.

And, some fine day, a new dramatist shall arise whose works shall be as magic spells. They shall witch the world. They shall be acted everywhere. The playhouses shall not hold the people. His name shall be a power in the land, and in all the lands. I know not what manner of man this man shall be. But I do know this. He will be a man to whom all the critics shall be as though they were not. He will be a man who will care nothing for any word that critics ever wrote, or ever will write. This coming dramatist, this Shakespeare of the future—by the way, where were the critics when Shakespeare wrote?—one may be sure, will be a man who will have rid himself of, at least, the most dangerous of the dramatist's many friends.

And, note this, because he treats the critics with complete indifference, paying them no heed of any sort or kind, at his feet they will bow down and worship in the end. They invariably do do this. For, while they are seldom, or never, able to distinguish the rising sun, they are ready enough to acknowledge his presence when, at high noon, he rules the skies.

THE DIVINITY THAT HEDGES.

A COMPLETE STORY.

THE fellow actually wanted to go through to Khartum! I stared at first, and then told him flatly that it was impossible. He had as much chance of reaching the moon.

"That's as may be," said he; "but, anyway, I'm going to have a try."

"But, my dear chap," I remonstrated, "if you do want to go to a town where all the blackguardism of Africa is buzzing like an upset wasps' nest, why the plague don't you try some more ordinary way—up the Nile; from Suakin; any way rather than from this Heaven-forsaken Tripoli!"

"Because I never heard of any one ever cutting across there from this same Tripoli before. No white man, at least."

"I don't believe it's ever been done; by niggers or anybody. You don't know what the desert is."

"I don't. But I shall do. You'll get me those camels and men, Pemberton?"

It was a bit awkward. Trade's trade to me, ever since I drifted out here and had to start earning a living; but, you see, Brane-Desent had been in my set in the old days at Christ Church, and it goes rather against the grain to give a quondam chum a leg-up towards committing suicide.

So I said: "Look here, I'm not going to

rush into this piece of foolery without my spectacles on. Have a drink, and let's talk it over."

"I don't mind having the drink, and I don't mind talking it over. But if you hope to talk me out of it, you may as well save your wind. If you don't get me those camels and the Johnnies to look after them, some one else will, that's about the size of it. Understand once for all, I'm going."

"What languages do you speak?"

"English, French, Gaelic, and German."

"No Arabic?"

"None."

"Nor *Lingua Franca*?"

"What's that? Never heard of it."

"Then how the devil do you expect to get along, may I ask? One day's journey outside this hub of civilisation you'll never hear a word spoken that you can understand. Do you expect to go striding a stinking, spluttering camel away out to Khartum in polo boots and a Norfolk jacket?"

"Oh, I suppose I shall have to mount nigger's rig—black my face, and wear a fez, and all that."

"Why, you incomparable idiot, how far do you think you'd get? Your guides would slit your throat before you'd got a dozen miles away from the walls, just to prevent your getting robbed by some one else further on."

"Sure of that, Pemberton?"

"Sure, my good fellow! Do you suppose I've been here in the senna trade for eight awful years without picking up a thing or two about the natives? Go and ask the consul, man."

"I have done already."

"Well?"

"And he said the same thing, and sent me along to you. But I tell you what: I'll bet you fifty to one in English tenners you're both of you wrong. No, don't laugh. I don't want to welsh you. I'll deposit my stakes at the bank here, if there is one, so that you can help yourself if I don't turn up to claim. You see, I don't disguise from myself that there is some risk in the trip."

"That's very far-seeing of you."

"Yes, isn't it? But science must be served."

"Science be blessed! All the science in creation wouldn't drag you out there."

He looked rather savage at this last remark of mine, and turned to leave the store with a curt announcement that he should expect me to see about his trans-

port and escort. As he was going I sang out after him again:

"The Florio-Rubattino boat leaves to-morrow. Don't be a fool. Get aboard of her and go off to Leghorn again. You've seen all there is worth seeing in this world's-end hole."

I don't approve of leaving half empty bottles about the place, so I finished the one we had opened; and then feeling very miserable, tapped another bottle, and got outside that, too. This freak of Brane-Desent's upset me. I didn't want to help the man murder himself, and yet—trade was trade. If I didn't make money out of him through getting camels and guides, some one else assuredly would. The halt between these two opinions parched one.

After siesta the fellow turned up again. He seemed in the deuce of a hurry to get off. I reminded him that no power in creation could hustle things in Tripoli, and bid him make up his mind to go slow.

He said he would have all necessary patience.

That seemed a point gained. He was not so keen as he had been in the morning. I might yet persuade him to go home and not make a fool of himself. I put the matter to him squarely—told him to think of his sister, and his widowed mother, and all the rest of them, and, in fact, worked myself up to such a pitch that I fairly blubbered.

He took the interference badly at first, and said I had been drinking.

I told him he was an ungrateful brute to say that. I had hardly touched liquor all day; it was anxiety for a dear old college friend which was upsetting me.

He was more civil after that, and with a bit of pressing came out with one of the oddest tales I've ever lent ear to. I didn't care for the way he prefaced his remarks. He said: "Confession eases one sometimes, and I don't suppose you'll remember a word of what I've said by to-morrow morning." He evidently ascribed my emotion to the bottle and not to anxiety for himself. This was an insult, but I did not resent it openly. I shook my head at him sorrowfully, and then bunched myself together and prepared to listen.

"You know Cannes, Pemberton? Of course you do. Well, it was there the thing happened. I've got a bit of a 'cottage ornée' below the Californie, and have been putting in some time this winter painting little things amongst the Esterels. I really worked pretty hard, for me, and

only looked in at the club during the evenings. I thought of fixing my pictures up into a little quarto book—Japanese paper, and all the rest of it—just for private circulation, you know. However, I guess that will have to wait over now. I've taken a dislike to the Riviera climate."

He pulled up there, so I broke in:

"The three-day mistral coming on every week; ice on the Croisette; great-coats and blue noses. Yes, I know. But then one can always run over to Monte. The *salle de jeu* is nice and warm, and that American bar at the *Café Paris*——"

He cut in again there rather dreamily; I don't think he had heard a syllable of what I said.

"I had walked out that day towards Cap d'Antibes, as it was a bit too blowy for painting, and I met her for the first time. It was just where the road rises for that final dip down towards the town. A gust took charge of her hat and blew it slap into my hands a hundred feet away. I carried it back and she seemed very grateful. She thanked me in German, and blushed a bit. The colour became her. She was a trifle pale before, and, indeed, rather plain. When flushed she would have been noted amongst a crowd. But I had no excuse for loitering; we were heading in different directions. So I raised my hat, said that I was very glad to have been of any service to her, and went on my way towards Cannes.

"She was very simply and quietly dressed, and had a child with her. I put her down as a German governess, and although governesses are a class for which I have, as a rule, but small sympathy, I felt sorry for her somehow or other, and wished she were in a different sphere of life. In fact, I could not get her out of my head, and in the evening, at the club, I had it put to me with much pointedness that my whist was distinctly off colour.

"By the strangest fluke in the world, I met her again on the very next day but one, and helped her out of identically the same predicament. This time it was down by the harbour, and a sharp eddy of wind had torn her headgear bodily from its moorings, pins and all. The hat was a light, flat-brimmed affair, and took to the air like a kittiwake. Its flight was checked on the very brink of the quay wall by a friendly warp, and I grabbed it just on the hover. The crown was muddied a little, but a wipe from a handkerchief soon put that right. Then I restored it.

"This time it was '*Je vous remercie bien, M'sieu,*' with as good a Parisian accent as one could wish for. For the second time, too! It was so stupid of her not to be more careful of her hats; so clever of me to save the straw from a watery grave; but it was the third day of the mistral, and so we might look forward to a spell of calm weather. In fact, she was evidently inclined for a chat, when she caught sight of some one beckoning in a carriage on ahead, and gave me my *congé*, saying that she must go without delay. I should have felt inclined to press my company a trifle longer if I had followed my own inclinations. But I saw she could be a very dignified little woman when she chose; and besides, I thought that the old lady in the carriage was her employer, and I knew that governesses usually get it hot when they are seen talking to strange young men in public thoroughfares. So we exchanged bows and parted.

"I saw the carriage go on through the flower market, and noting a stall where it pulled up, went there afterwards and made a purchase, not because I wanted a bouquet, but merely as excuse for asking a question. But I could not make out who my unknowns were. The stall-woman said they were not regular customers. She did not know them in the least. She thought they were Russians, because they were so rich and talked French so well; but they might be French. I made other enquiries at the club and elsewhere, but without success. Perhaps my descriptions were too vague. Cannes is a comparatively small place, but everybody does not know everybody else. The winter population is a shifting one. The only one suggestion I had given me was that madame was the wife of a Polish financier who lived in Belgium, but after being at some pains to meet that person in a drawing-room, I found she was not the individual I wanted.

"You may think it strange that I was putting myself to all this trouble, but the fact of the matter was, I couldn't knock that little governess-girl out of my thoughts. It wasn't the smallest use to start on the Esterels again; I couldn't paint one little bit. I did nothing but smoke, and think, and wander about the place in hopes of stumbling across her again.

"I didn't see her for a week after that meeting down by the harbour, and was beginning to fear that she had gone

away from the place. If she had gone, I believe I should have searched Europe through and through till I had found her again; but as it was, that piece of madness was spared me. I was walking up towards the Observatory one day, when I came across her by the side of the canal. She was seated on a camp-stool, busily at work upon a water-colour.

"I believe I almost made a fool of myself at first; very nearly gave myself away, in fact; but we shook hands as if we had known one another for years instead of having met twice over a blown-off hat, and had chatted for three hours before I knew five minutes had passed. I wanted to carry the kit back for her; but she would not let me see her home. She had a quiet little way of ordering, that one never dreamed of questioning. Indeed, one scarcely noticed at the time that her requests were practically commands. So I continued my walk, which had been interrupted, up towards the Observatory, and she picked up camp-stool and paint-box and went off briskly through the pines towards the path below.

"I had gained one thing, however, that sent me off jubilant at heart. The sketch had promise, and was most certainly worth completing, I had impressed upon her as a candid professional opinion; and she, after a little consideration, said that she would probably come back and finish it. 'To-morrow?' She laughed. Perhaps so; perhaps not. When she had time. Good-bye. Poor little governess, thought I, that means you will come when they give you a holiday.

"However, as it happened, she did come on the morrow, and on several morrows, until that picture was finished; and then she started another from another point, and worked as diligently at that. The canal was a favourite walk. This second picture was of a tiny dell full of browns and greens, deeper amongst the pine-woods. I suggested the spot; she accepted my choice; and our *têtes-à-tête* were never broken in upon.

"I was to her merely a journeyman painter. I kept the cash in the background, preferring not to bring that to bear. She was to me the little governess who spoke English, and French, and German with equal fluency. She had travelled widely—as a dependent, I presumed. What country-woman she was I did not discover. I did not even know her name—nor she mine. It was truly 'un

égoïsme à deux.' And it was self, not status, that each cared for in the other.

"Of what we spoke I cannot tell you accurately. So many things passed in review before us. We seemed to have boundless sympathies in common. She was my ideal of woman—utterly unaffected, yet supremely self-respecting. I grew to know and reverence her character as I had never done woman's before. We met each morning by tacit agreement; and each morning I seemed to find out some new reason to admire her more.

"And so the days were bright for us during a whole month, and then as I judged our mutual feelings had long been as clear as the sky above us, I thought to bring matters to a tardy climax.

"To her eternal credit be it said, she tried desperately hard to stop me, when she saw what my speech trended to. She commanded me to leave the subject; and when I would not, she rose from the soft brown carpet of pine-needles, where we were seated together, and began to walk quickly away. I sprang up, strode after, and seized her wrist.

"'I have told that I love you,' I said. 'You must let me hear whether you will be my wife!'

"'I can never be,' she said very quietly.

"I dropped her wrist—flung it from me.

"'You have been fooling with me,' I said. 'You must have seen from the very first minute how I cared. And yet, after all this time, can you say that I am as nothing to you?'

"She gave a queer little cry. I heard the same once before, in Naples, from a man who was stabbed in the throat.

"'Your answer?' I demanded.

"'I love you,' she said, 'as I have never loved before, and as I shall never love man again.'

"Before the words were all spoken I had her wrapped tightly in my arms, and she lay there quiet as a dead woman.

"Then you shall be my wife,' I said.

"'It cannot be.'

"'I say it shall!'

"She shook her head.

"'Do you know who I am?' she asked.

"'No,' I told her; 'neither do I care. I have wooed you as the unknown governess of a woman whose name I have not learnt. You yourself are all I ask for. About your ancestry, means, history, and all that, I do not care one rap.'

"She gave a hard little laugh, and—told me her name.

"Great heavens! This girl whom I loved, who had avowed love in return, was a daughter of the highest reigning house in Europe, a princess whom an emperor's son might marry.

"I loosed my arms involuntarily, and started back. I believe I nearly fainted.

"She was ghastly pale, but her wits appeared collected.

"Now you see,' she said, 'how we are situated. Let us say no more. Let us part here—for always. Good-bye.'

"That roused me, and once more I took her in my arms. I pointed out that if she went away my life would be ruined; and, by her own showing, her life would be ruined also. I said a thousand things to shake her resolve. I believe I must have grown almost eloquent—as even a slow-tongued man may do once in his life. I implored her to throw away her share of the empty pageantries, the intrigues, the hollownoses of Court life; grew almost abject in my prayers that she should cast in her lot with mine. Then, as she continued sorrowfully to shake her head, as a last resort, I spoke to her of my wealth, of those heavy thousands which till now had been kept so studiously in the background, and assured her that so far as mere creature comforts went nothing need be lacking. She would lose no single jot in that way, if she would consent to enter upon this new life, for which, from her own admission, we were both equally wishful.

"But there she fired up.

"Do you think so meanly of me,' she demanded, 'as to imagine that a paltry question of money would balance the difference? If I made a morganatic marriage, you may be sure that love would have been the only inducement.' And then her voice sank again, soft and pleading, and in tones that scarcely rose above the sighing of the pines, she told me how she was fettered; how an alliance was already planned for her; how she might help to bring two great nations together; stave off war; prevent the misery of thousands. Her country had the omnipotent claim. Her inclinations, and mine, were as nothing compared to that greater call. As I loved her; by the kiss she gave me then—the first and last; as I was a man; she bade me help her do her duty.

"And then she went away.

"The scent of the pines seemed to have vanished; the mistral came down cold and rain-laden; Cannes was Aceldama."

He stopped there. After a pause I suggested:

"And so?"

"And so, Pemberton, I came out here, made up my mind to cut into a new line—scientific discovery, and all the rest of it. Well, ta-ta, old man. Give the Geneva bottle a holiday this evening and get those camels for me, like a good chap. You can understand that a change of air and scene are necessary for my health."

And then he went out of the store.

The senna trade is thirsty work. Besides, that infernal Khartum idea of Brane-Desent's worried me. So, perhaps, during the next day or two I did nip rather heavily. The climate also had much to do with it. If you know Tripoli, you will understand that, for an Englishman there exporting senna, such a course is unavoidable. Anyway, I got confined to the house with a touch of the old complaint, and in the meanwhile my scoundrelly Greek partner got Brane-Desent what he wanted. The fellow said, when I cursed him about it, that if we hadn't raked up the camels, some one else would have done. Besides, he never let sentiment stand in the way of money-making, and, as it was, we'd cleared a good round sum out of the transaction.

So off our explorer had gone. And, perhaps, come to think of the matter, it was for the best.

IN A TRAVELLERS' SMOKING-ROOM.

IF a professional valuer were appointed to appraise the objects which deck the walls of our smoking-room, he would probably, although consumed with genuine anxiety to make the best of a poor job, shrug his shoulders and say politely that he didn't think they were worth valuing, and that there was not a single article which would command a bid from a disinterested outsider.

And he would speak the truth. But valueless as are the contents of our smoking-room from a market point of view, to us, the collectors, they are priceless simply on account of the associations linked with each object.

Let me preface briefly. It is not an ornate smoking-room of the modern æsthetic pattern, but is fitted up far more with cosiness as an object than effect, and

it is purposely situated in a remote corner of the house, partly so that unrestrained talk and mirth may go on until any hour of the morning without annoyance to the other occupants of the house, and partly because the aroma of a dozen pipes could hardly penetrate beyond its double doors.

The first object which usually catches the visitor's eye is a large key, suspended to a brass-headed nail. As a key it is not a curio, but its translation hither is curious. One of us was a middy on board the "Iron Duke" during the cruise when she ran down the "Vanguard," and whilst the ship was at Lisbon went ashore with some chosen companions. After a more or less frolicsome career through the streets of the Portuguese capital, the young gentlemen espied the door of a majestic building open, and, in the innocence of inquisitive youth, entered. It was the Grand Opera House, and a rehearsal of the opera of "Guillaume Tell" was in full swing. This so delighted the young Britons that they not merely applauded frequently and vehemently, but, no doubt with the best intentions, joined in the choruses.

So far from appreciating this uninvited aid, the singers resented it, the result being that after a scuffle the young gentlemen found themselves in the street and the door slammed on them.

But the slammers of the door had overlooked the fact that the key was outside, and the middies quietly took their innings by locking the performers in and walking off with the key.

How or when the artistes were released history does not say, but the key hangs in our smoking-room.

Above the key is slung an alpenstock, with a gourd suspended to it.

At a certain period of life some of one's saddest memories are those which speak of enjoyments and recreations which have been outgrown, or, it should rather be said, for the thorough appreciation of, and indulgence in which one has got too old. Such are the feelings of the shelved cricketer, or rowing man, or hunting man, or mountaineer. After this age, other recreations and pursuits assert their sway, and the feeling of sadness wears off.

This alpenstock is one of the memorials which are still rather sad, for its battered, branded length is eloquent with the recollection of happy nights and days, such as can only be happy to one in the full strength and hardihood of young manhood.

It is no ornamental stick, bought at Chamounix or Interlaken, ready branded with the names of peaks within the shadow of which it has never been, but is a regular climbing tool, and although the owner was not a regular cragsman or a member of the Alpine Club, it has helped him in the ascent of as many mountains as the average holiday-maker, who does not make a toil of a pleasure, wants to get up, and if endowed with the gift of speech could tell one or two stirring tales of adventure amidst the eternal snows of Alpine solitudes.

Mention of mountaineering leads us to another relic close by, a small bronze bell of quaint design. It is a Japanese pilgrim bell, and it recalls one happy week out of four as happy years as are granted to ordinary men. Very well I remember obtaining that bell. It was September, Anno 1873. The Tocaïdo, or the great road of the Eastern Sea—then relatively a livelier and more flourishing institution than it is in these days of the ubiquitous railway, but sadly shorn of its ancient glories—was crowded with the swarms of pilgrims who annually flock to Fuji-San—that peerless mountain of which the shape is so familiar to all who possess objects of Japanese manufacture—or to O-Yama, a less important but very holy mountain.

It was blazing hot weather, and we were halted at the "Lobster" tea-house in the village of Koyias, at the foot of O-Yama; the tea-house, large as it was, was crowded to overflowing, and we, having dined off stewed fish, and rice, and seaweed jelly, and "zakidofu," washed down by the good wine of the "Leaping Carp," were smoking our pipes as we watched and sketched the motley crowd of men, women, and children who were coming and going, eating and drinking, singing, laughing, chattering, haggling, and gesticulating on all sides; we in turn being central objects of curiosity, for in 1873 the globe-trotter had not been let loose on the fair Land of the Rising Sun, and there were yet many places within easy distance of Yokohama where the figure of the "stupid invader" was but rarely seen.

Near to us was a respectable old gentleman—as was evident by his travelling in a chair, and with servants—who took a lively interest in our sketching. We struck up an acquaintance, and in return for some sheets of character drawings, he handed us his bell, with a long explanation of which we did not understand a word.

We carried that bell about with us for a

week, and brought it home as a relic of an old-world institution, which has probably passed away from Japan for ever, as we hear that the modern pilgrim travels by rail as far as he can, instead of spending a pleasant, rollicking week on the road, and is by no means faithful to the old rule that the good pilgrim, of whatsoever condition, should be clad in white, should only carry with him absolute necessities of travel, and should bear his bell.

On the same shelf as the bell straddles a ferocious-looking beetle of large size. Although but a beetle, he is a reminder of very happy days spent in quite another part of the world. His home was the West Indian island of Dominica—loveliest, saddest, and stillest of as fair a circlet of colonies as Britain possesses. All the West Indian Islands, save St. Kitts, Antigua, and Barbados, are beautiful; but we fell most completely in love with Dominica, not so much, perhaps, on account of its beauty—for St. Lucia, Trinidad, Grenada, St. Vincent, Tobago, and Jamaica are as beautiful—but because of the forlorn, neglected, unvisited condition, which invested it with almost a pathetic air. The beetle is really the mildest and shyest of creatures, and the mandibles which give him so formidable an appearance are only used for tearing out the pith of banana stems. It was a lovely spot where we found him—on the rough pony track which traverses the heart of the mountains to the Fresh Water Lake; behind us a dense bank of the most glorious trees, ferns, flowers, and jungle imaginable; in front of us a mighty ravine thickly clothed with forest, and dividing us from a mountain mass, wooded to the very summit, and probably untrodden by the foot of man—absolute silence, save for the occasional call of the mocking bird, or the rustle of a big lizard through the undergrowth; a deep blue sky above us, from which shone a sun whose rays would have been murderous but for the faint, sweet breeze blowing up from the sea hundreds of feet below us. We spent a fortnight in this Dominican paradise, and we left it with feelings of regret quite as intense as those with which we took our farewell look at Japan.

Side by side with the beetle are two more West Indian relics. One is a ball of asphalt taken from the world-renowned Pitch Lake in the island of Trinidad.

This Pitch Lake is an orthodox sight, by which we mean one of those sights not to see which is regarded as a heresy

scarcely less lamentable than to visit London without seeing Westminster Abbey; but on account of its unique character is a sight which is really worth taking some trouble to see. This trouble is pleasant enough, consisting as it does of a railway journey to San Fernando, and a steamer trip across the bay to La Brea.

La Brea, although in Trinidad, offers no scenic attractions. It is a squalid, ordinary collection of huts which give no inkling of the boundless wealth lying close by. A short but trying walk along an exposed road torn into deep ruts by the passage of the asphalt carts leads to the lake—an open space of nearly a hundred acres consisting entirely of pitch.

One may walk freely on the surface, but there are spots where it is advisable to step quickly in order to avoid a bottomless grave. Carts are busy on all sides filling up with the stuff, as they are busy every day and all day without producing any apparent effect on the supply, for a pit dug out overnight is replenished by the morning.

The other relic is also a ball, but of lead, and was brought from the highest battery of the deserted fortifications on the top of Brimstone Hill in the island of St. Kitts.

Excursions to scenes of faded human grandeur are always tinged with melancholy, and although the Gibraltar of the West Indies, as Brimstone Hill was called, was only evacuated some forty years ago, one is impressed there much as one is at Pompeii or in Egypt. It is sad to wander up and down through magnificent ranges of buildings which are not by any means ruined, although they are utterly solitary, and quite choked with the luxuriant tropical vegetation which has sprung up unchecked, and to think of the active, stirring, gay life that once throbbed here, and in the half-ruined town of Sandy Point on the shore below.

We brought away this rusty old ball as the solitary portable relic we could find of this life; but if its memory is kept alive in no other way, it is by the huge tanks from which in times of drought the owners of the cane-pieces below are glad to draw their supplies of water.

The "next article" is regarded as a curiosity in the south of England, although north-countrymen are moved to mirth at the notion of its being considered worthy of a place amongst genuine curiosities from far-distant lands. It is one of the small

leather caps with peak behind worn by coal-pitmen, and is a souvenir of a descent into what was ten years ago one of the deepest pits in England—that known as the Wearmouth in the heart of the town of Sunderland.

The gentleman who parted with this cap parted with half the attire he had on at the moment; the other half being his knee-breeches. When we accosted him he was lying on his back hewing at the wall of coal beside him in company with three or four "marrows" similarly attired and occupied. It was in one of the deepest workings of the pit, and notwithstanding the current of air passed through, the heat was tremendous. To learn what absolute silence means, one cannot do better than separate oneself from one's party in the depths of a coal-pit away from workings. I know of nothing like it save the silence of the Royal burial chamber in the heart of the Great Pyramid, and so absolute is it that it is with a feeling of genuine relief that one rejoins friends and hears the sound of voices.

Some of the pleasantest recollections summoned up by a survey of the articles in our smoking-room are associated with sundry unimportant and uninteresting-looking bricks, tiles, and fragments of pottery, lying on a shelf apart, which were in constant danger of being consigned to the dust-bin as "rubbish" by zealous hand-maidens, until a distinct law had to be passed that this one room in the house was never to be invaded by wielders of pan and brush.

We had the Roman fever once very strong amongst us, and these relics are from various parts of the ancient Roman empire, and tell of many a pleasant holiday in the past.

For instance, this marble fragment of what must have been a graceful and delicate little female figure, was lying on a heap of rubbish close to the House of Cæsar in the Roman Forum. Vandalism it may be called to rob a land of even its humblest antiquarian treasures, and we should ever be first and foremost in maintaining this, but this fragment had evidently either never been noticed or had been spurned as unworthy of notice, and we were anxious to secure a little tangible something to remind us of long, happy mornings and afternoons spent amongst the faded glory of old days.

There is a tile from old Verulamium,

and, strangely enough, like its neighbour, which was brought from the villa at Bignor, on the Sussex Stane Street, it is deeply impressed with the exact pattern of the Union Jack.

This stone is from the old Appian Way, far beyond the usual tourist limit, the Tomb of Cecilia Metella, and not far from the traditional site of the "Three Taverns." It had to be cleared of a fine crop of grass before it showed itself.

A large heap of ware—brown Upchurch, red Samian, and common blue brown—was collected during a pilgrimage along Hadrian's Wall, between Newcastle-on-Tyne and Bowness-on-Solway—a most delightful four-day tramp in the finest weather, and through a country of which almost literally every acre teems with antiquarian, historical, and romantic interest.

One object has a place amongst these relics which has no right there except that to it hangs a tale. It is a bit of red tile, and this is how it was unearthed. Two of us, enthusiasts for Brito-Roman remains, were hard at work with spade and pick, in rain and mud, on the Roman Camp at Whitley on the Maiden Way, between Alston and Slaggyford, in Cumberland. We had toiled for a long time without success, and were on the point of giving the job up as a bad one, when the pick struck something hard, and amidst expressions of delight a fragment of red tiling was dragged forth.

This was at the close of day. Carefully, almost reverently, we took it to our inn, and, after supper, washed the dirt off on the chance of finding a maker's stamp. We did find it, and it was—

"Smithers, West Bromwich."

It was such a true sell to mistake a modern drain-pipe for a Roman tile that, although contributing to our own ridicule, we kept it. But we could tales unfold of mistakes quite as ludicrous made by regular Dryasdusts, men who have written books and delivered lectures, and who have stuck to them with a pluck worthy of a better cause. Indeed, we have in a cruel moment passed this very fragment off on one of these gentlemen as a genuine "bit," and were punished for our deception by a long lecture upon Roman pottery and tile work, bristling with quotations, and delivered with all the prolixity dear to the Dryasdust heart.

Next is a fire trophy flanked by two helmets. One is an American fire hat of

leather with a deep flap behind, a relic of the days of Yokohama before any foreign organisation of fire companies came to the assistance of the poor Jappers, who were quite content to face the largest conflagrations with syringes which would hardly sprinkle a rhododendron bed. This old hat has been in many a fire, for what was destruction and often death to the natives was the best of fun to us youngsters, and cheerfully would we turn out during the small hours of winter mornings to have a hand in a fire. But the state of affairs became serious when two or three foreign houses were burned to the ground for the want of a proper fire service, and the matter was discussed, and by the next winter we had two very smart fire companies with steam engines, and brass helmets, and all the rest of it.

The other helmet belonged to the chief of the Tokio Fire Brigade. It is a tremendous affair of brass and copper, elaborately decorated, and formerly was topped with big feathers, for the chief was a very great man, and rode on horseback, and had his standard-bearer. All this sort of pomp and circumstance has been swept away by the new broom of Western civilisation, so that this old helmet is a genuine relic of things that were and will never be again.

The two fire-hooks between the helmets have done good service in their time; and they, too, as being obsolete, are curiosities.

A variety of odds and ends speak very plainly to us who regard them as old friends of days gone by, and of scenes which, if they be revisited, can never be revisited in quite the spirit of the past.

There is a Zulu war-shield of oxhide picked up at Isandula by that same member who pocketed the key of the Lisbon opera-house, and who served through the campaign as a volunteer; over which is a formidable array of war weapons from Fiji and New Zealand.

A group of Chinese josses, much stained and battered, are curious in that they belonged to a Canton junk which, during that terrible typhoon which ravaged the coasts around Hong Kong some twenty years ago, was carried bodily inland by a huge wave and deposited in a paddy field a quarter of a mile from the shore.

We pass pans, and lacquers, and bronzes, and such things which, although curious enough when they were brought from the Far East twenty years ago, may now be bought as cheaply in London, Paris, or New York; but we pause for a few mo-

ments at a small object which nine people out of ten would pass unnoticed. It is an insignificant little bronze ornament, with its ornamentation knocked away beyond recognition.

It once was a candlestick attached to a drawing-room mirror in one of the most charming of the many country houses which before the great war abounded around Paris generally, and St. Cloud in particular. The owner of this pleasant retreat on the Route du Calvaire, a Spaniard of good family, was a somewhat more than locally famous collector of all that was rare and original and beautiful in porcelain and faience, and his rooms were at once the delight and the despair of all who were smitten with this elegant mania. More than this, his house was a social centre for the Spanish colony in Paris; and the writer will never forget the sweet summer Sundays spent in the fine old garden in the company of men and women who seemed to reflect in tone, in attitude, in manner, and in style of conversation, that old-world politeness and brilliancy and courtesy which many Englishmen are apt to believe existed nowhere but in the great French salons before the Revolution.

Then came the war, and the advance of Germany to the gates of Paris.

The priceless collection of porcelain was carefully packed in the cellars, the house shut up, and the family withdrew into Paris, and there they remained until the storm was over.

The last devastating fires lit by the Communists in Paris were still smouldering when the writer, who was living at Chantilly, by the condescending permission of the officers of the Prussian Augusta regiment, went into Paris and from Paris to St. Cloud.

I had seen plenty of the track of war by this time, but never to such fulness as when I stepped ashore at St. Cloud. Scrambling, tumbling, climbing over heaps of ruins, I made my way through an utterly silent and solitary world along what I guessed was the route to the old house—or rather to the site of it. The four walls remained, nothing more. Shells and flames had done their work but too well. The beautiful garden was a howling waste; the terrace was scarcely to be traced.

Amongst the chaos of rubbish I sought a memento of old times; and this little bronze candlestick top was all I could find.

I learned afterwards that the Germans had occupied the villa, but had been shelled out by Mont Valérien, and that the collection of porcelain was found untouched in the cellars, although not a bottle of wine had escaped.

Pleasanter recollections are called up by a massive rosary with crucifix attached. This came from Mont Saint Michel, and is a memento of a walking tour in Normandy. We could walk in those days, as the record of our itinerary testifies. We were not particular where we slept or what we ate and drank, and the vision is still fresh of sunlit roads winding through a picturesque country of orchard and pasture, of quaint old towns with fine churches and rich in "bits" for the sketch-book, of odd little wayside inns, of market-places crowded with picturesque buyers and sellers, and of a cheery, kindly people, amongst whom it was a real pleasure to be a stranger.

Of the sundry relics dotted about passing notes will suffice. Here is a fir-cone brought from that historic spot at Concord Bridge, in the State of Massachusetts, where was fired the "shot heard round the world," and where a plain slab let into the rough stone wall, which bounds the domain of Hawthorne's Old Manse, records the "grave of British soldiers."

Here a pair of moccasins, worked by Indians of a tribe with an unpronounceable much less writable name, recalls a midwinter visit to Niagara, and the experiences of life with the thermometer at twelve degrees below zero. Here a variety of flags and emblems recall the excitement of a Presidential Election in the United States.

A small trophy consisting of a wire-gauze mask, a long-handled tin shovel, and a fool's cap and bells, is a memento of a certain carnival at Nice, when, during the best part of a day, a party of usually sedate and presumably sane Englishmen and women were in the heart of the Battle of the Confetti, and wound up with a wild arm-in-arm dance, somewhat of the Carmagnole type, up the Avenue de la Saxe. Of course there are pipes of all sorts and sizes and shapes—from the massive German porcelain with its three feet of stem to an old English four-inch clay, which was found in the cellar of a house at Streatham—including Chinese opium pipes, Japanese pipes, hubble-bubbles, hookahs, Italian terra-cottas, Indian, "cum multis aliis." Here we bring our rapid survey to

a close, although we have not alluded to one-half of the objects accumulated in what may fairly be called a Travellers' Smoking-Room, inasmuch as their interest is personal rather than general.

"TOOZEY."

NORTH-EAST Essex! The very name is suggestive of the flat, the commonplace, and the utterly monotonous. However, we managed to extract some little enjoyment from the scene as we went jog-trotting along one fine clear day from Frinton-on-Sea to St. Oysth's. The said jog-trotting was necessitated, I suppose, by our steed being probably Essex raised, and therefore as free from any form of excitement as the character of the scenery, or of the inhabitants themselves.

On the one side of our sandy road lay flat, far-reaching stretches of marshy pasture-land, divided here and there by feathery lines of tall fen grasses; on the other, green meadows and brown harvest fields swept outwards to the sea. The hedgerow was well-nigh covered with brambles and blackberries, the latter in all stages of colour, from the pink flowers to the ripe, purple berries; then there was a brave show of scarlet "hips and haws," and here and there a gleaming line of yellow toad-flax, a clump of white campion, or a group of red poppies.

The chief feature of the way was the little wooden houses—much more warm and comfortable, we were told, than the ordinary brick or plaster cottage—with their cheery-looking front gardens, bright with dahlias pink, dahlias red, and all the mixed and striped varieties so dear to the heart of the cultivator. Dahlia glories, however, always mind one of on-coming autumn, and we found further signs of the season in hints of red and yellow among the bramble leaves; the cornfields, too, had become stubble, much to the delight of the numerous sheep and black pigs there disporting themselves in diligent search for stray ears of corn—energetic gleaners, those, and free from unpleasant calculation of ways and means, too prolonged potations, and other evils to which their two-legged betters are prone.

Presently we passed through the old-fashioned village of Great Clacton, and then, as we neared St. Oysth's, there appeared an inexplicable blaze of colour—no ordinary roadside greens and browns,

but long stripes of brilliant blues, dull purples, bright pinks, and startling reds, relieved by squares of green in all its various tones, and, squandered amongst it all in grand profusion, shining lines of yellow, orange, and golden-brown. This was the flower farm of a well-known firm of London seedsmen.

At last we found ourselves at St. Osyth's, or, as the inhabitants prefer to call it, "Tooze," and stopped to buy the necessary tickets to "view the Priory." These were to be had, at the modest sum of sixpence each, at the "Red Lion," where, as the guide-book points out, there is "a carved lion couchant over the swinging sign," and a most dejected, dark-red gentleman he is, evidently suffering from a bad attack of toothache, if one may judge from the attitude of his fore-paw and the severity of his countenance.

We were soon waiting admission at the Priory gate, armed with a Lancaster camera, but the lady of the lodge seemed accustomed to such imprudence and prohibited its further entrance, so we had to content ourselves with taking an outside view of the gateway, a very handsome late Norman structure of hewn stone and flint, according to the ever-present guide-book.

Once inside, and having duly admired the house—an irregular-looking pile of buildings of various dates—we wandered through the old-fashioned gardens to the chapel. This has been lately restored, and is used daily by the "sisters" and others living at the home of rest, established by the present owner of the Priory.

At every turn one is greeted by remains of old work, some Tudoresque, some thirteenth century, some Norman, and some reputed to be Roman. We ascended the tower, and looked across to the sea, wondering, as one will wonder, how many before us had watched that same sea, had looked, perhaps, for coming friend or foreign foe—for St. Osyth's has seen many troublous times from the day when its saintly founder was murdered by the invading Dane, till the time when it was plundered and ravaged by an "unruly mob of schismatics" in the civil wars of the seventeenth century.

Of course there are dungeons belonging to the building—gruesome, noisome cells stretching along underground to the beach below; but now happily blocked up. There is also a ghost; and this is its

history: "The Danes, under Ingvar and Hubba, landing from a creek close by, and hunting for prey and plunder, found the Lady Osyth at the fountain and cut off her head. When the head first rolled from the shoulders at the stroke of the cruel Dane, she picked it up tenderly with her hands and carried it to the church of Saint Peter and Saint Paul; but the door was shut, so she knocked at it with her blood-stained hands, and then fell prostrate—dead." And now, on each anniversary of her death-day, at the witching hour of twelve, Saint Osyth walks again—head in hand. It would be interesting to meet some one who has seen her, and to learn if ghosts are able to speak in this curious and anomalous position. Our guide, however, could not help us; she only knew that there was a general inclination to keep to the more frequented paths as night came on, and that there was one old man who steadily refused to go through the old tower even in twilight.

From the Priory we went across to the church—being met at the door by the vergereess, who deeply lamented our being just too late for the harvest festival decorations, which decorations, according to her account, must have been quite as well worth visiting as the Priory itself. There were left, however, traces of an arch of greenery, ornamented by small coloured candles of the Christmas-tree type; also a wonderful banner adorned with horns of plenty—in gold paper—and a scythe—in silver ditto—and so we were able to console ourselves with the thought that possibly the other and ordinary attractions of the church might prove even more satisfactory.

Our first impression of the interior was, however, decidedly depressing—vide, a wide nave filled on either side with very light-coloured, old-fashioned, high-backed pews, decorated here and there by what at first sight looked to be milliners' blocks, but which, on further enquiry, turned out to be stands for the necessary evening oil-lamps.

Round each pillar is an ordinary hat-rack, affording every accommodation for high hats, low hats, overcoats, and possibly umbrellas; we noticed further two old-fashioned square pews, one—an heirloom of the D'Arcy family—roofed in so as to present the idea of an ancient dismembered coach. The most striking feature of the church is the altar rail, formed somewhat in the shape of a horseshoe—an exact copy

of the shape of the old oak rail, not so very long taken away.

On either side of the altar is a massive sculptured monument representing a former owner of the Priory, and all around the chancel is painted—ob, that one should live to tell it!—a short edition, about three feet high, of the favourite red velvet dramatic curtain on an equally imaginary brass rod. Some fine modern stained glass has, however, been added to the chancel, and the archæologist will be interested in a low side window, a "squint," and other relics of ancient date.

One might, indeed, spend hours most pleasantly and profitably in the precincts of St. Osyth's; the village itself has a thoroughly old-world air about it, as though the influence of bygone ages were still breathed out from the Priory walls, and rash and bold would he be who ventured the latest improvements in things, mundane or spiritual, under shadow of those two ancient landmarks, the church of Saint Peter and Saint Paul, and the Priory of St. Osyth. Indeed, we fancy, it might not have been so very long ago since the good people, before going to bed, "did rake up the fire, make a cross in the ashes, and pray to God and Saint Osyth to deliver them from fire and water, and all misadventure." And so we turned homewards, in the evening light, amid the white mist rising from the rush-lined marshes, pondering on the days of old so picturesquely present with us, and convinced that in the flats of North-east Essex may be found beauty, interest, and pleasure.

MARA.

A STORY IN EIGHT CHAPTERS.

CHAPTER VII.

FOR the next hour Desmond Blake lay alone with no companion save his own sad thoughts. He knew that in all probability he would never live to see the sun rise again; he knew—none better—the fierce, implacable hatred of these men who had plotted against him; yet he gave hardly a passing thought to the danger which would have paralysed most men—his mind was with his wife.

Memory took him back to the time when he first saw her, pictured to him the country church, and that fair, lovely face which he had loved at first sight. He thought of the days that followed,

when he had hardly realised himself what she was to him; he saw again that scene by the riverside when he had avowed his love for her.

He lived for the second time through the delirious joy of his engagement and early married life, the trust and faith in his wife, the love he had lavished upon her, to be repaid by an occasional kiss, a sweet word carelessly spoken. Yet how well she had acted affection for him! So well, that now the whole crushing truth had come upon him, he was thankful to think that it would all be over soon, that in a short time he would be past all human sorrow.

Pat came at ten o'clock, with angry remonstrances on his lips at his master's determination to get up; but Desmond would listen to nothing. The dressing was a long process, for he nearly fainted twice from exhaustion; but at last Pat helped him downstairs to the drawing-room. He fell into a half slumber there, and the clock had struck twelve before he was roused by a noise from outside, a dull, heavy tramp, tramp, and the low murmur of many voices. He listened with a smile on his face as the tramp came nearer and nearer, till it stopped outside the hall door. Just then Warden came into the room.

"Did you hear?" he asked hoarsely.

"Yes, I heard. There are a good many of them. How many policemen have you got?"

"Twenty-two. Oh, Blake, give it up! Give it up! It might not hurt you if you were in health; but now— Any blow will be almost fatal to you."

Blake rose, and the two men stood face to face.

"A week ago," he said slowly, "I would have taken your advice, perhaps, though it would have gone sorely against the grain to shirk any fight. But for my wife's sake I might have tried to keep safe. Now— Warden, you must know how I loved her; you must know that, after learning what I have to-day, I don't care to live. So don't say any more, only do your best to show these fellows what fighting means."

"One thing I must ask, Blake. Will you forgive me—will you shake hands with me?"

Desmond held out his hand and gripped the other's closely.

"I do forgive everything. You will see her again. Will you tell her so—tell her that I love her to the last? And my mother—I don't know what to say to her; I should like to have seen her again. Warden, they will have that door in; don't open it till I come. Leave me for one moment."

He took up a portrait from the mantel-piece—a large, distinct likeness of Mara, that gave back her wonderful beauty with almost living reality—and looked at it lingeringly till the limpid, hazel eyes seemed to meet his with the old bewitching smile that he knew so well. How he loved her, loved her even now, when she had deceived him, forsaken him, in his hour of danger left him to a death which she might have averted!

The great hall door was echoing to the fierce blows of the enraged mob outside it. They had tried to unlock it with skeleton keys, but in vain, and they were beating upon it wildly in their ungovernable fury, when there was a sound within of the bolts being withdrawn. Involuntarily the men nearest it fell back as it opened slowly, and Desmond Blake stepped out and faced them, while close at his side Warden stood, and behind were the band of policemen.

For a few moments there was silence—dense, dead silence—while all those wild, glaring, bloodshot eyes were riveted on the tall figure who stood on the steps above them unmoved.

"Boys," he said quietly, "what do you come here for? And why do you try to force into my house? When did Desmond Blake ever refuse himself to any one?"

No one answered, and he went on:

"You want to speak to me, I suppose. I am ready to listen."

A hoarse cry came from the crowd.

"We want your life, Desmond Blake. You have hunted us down long enough, and now your time is come."

"You want my life! Hunted you down! Yes, I have hunted you down and brought you to bay, some of you," cried the deep, clear voice that every man heard distinctly. "You want to kill me, you say! I am ready to die, for my work among you is finished. You thought that in bringing me near death, three weeks ago, you would put an end to my work and so escape from the hangman—those of you who deserve his offices. Fools! The work is done; my last evidence is complete against the murderers I have been seeking. The papers are by now in Dublin Castle, and before long those of you who did that foul deed will swing for it."

There was a low, muffled roar, as of wild animals preparing to spring, when suddenly a cry rent the air—a cry of despair, remorse, surprise—which came from the lips of a man who emerged from

behind a tree—where he had been half carelessly listening to what had passed—to an open space, where he could see clearly the face of the man who stood on the steps.

"Stop! Stop! Boys, for the love of Heaven, stop! Oh, Heaven! save him!"

He sprang forward wildly, but his way was stopped, and he was thrown down.

Blake laughed aloud, a horrible, mocking laugh that drove his listeners to frenzy.

"You want my life! Come and take it, then! Cowards! devils! fiends! You shall pay a heavy reckoning for it! Oh, Heaven——"

He was down—struck full on the temple by a cruel, sharp stone, as the wild mob sprang at him, while Warden and the band of policemen threw themselves upon the mad, fighting throng of human beings, who struggled and tore at each other, hand to hand, shoulder to shoulder.

And the moon shone down its clear, cold light upon that scene of bloodshed, and lit up with an unearthly radiance the noble head of the man who lay on the top of the stone steps, while some one bent over him, trying in vain to restore the consciousness that seemed to have fled for ever. It was he who had uttered that passionate cry of warning just before the frenzy of the mob had reached its height; the man whom Mara had overheard that very morning plotting the devil's work that had just been done, whose voice had puzzled her by its likeness to her husband's; and his still handsome face was full of horror and remorse.

"Desmond!" he muttered. "Demie, my boy, the little lad I was once so fond of. I might have known by the name Desmond, yet I never guessed! My poor boy! I might have saved him, and I have helped to kill him!"

Still he stayed on there, never noticing that the cries and shouts of the struggle died away gradually, till a rough hand was laid on his shoulder.

"Have ye not done enough to-night, without robbing him?"

He started to his feet, and looked round. Several policemen were there, their faces and hands stained with blood, their clothes torn, while with them stood their captives, handcuffs on their wrists, their downcast faces haggard and fearful. The fight was over!

"Robbing him!" he cried wildly. "I would have given my life to save him. Oh, my boy, my boy! And he is dead!"

Warden came out of their midst, and bent over Blake's unconscious form.

"He is not dead!" he said quietly. "Two of you carry him to his room, and send for a doctor at once."

The man grasped his arm fiercely.

"Not dead!" he cried. "Are you deceiving me? Is he not dead?"

"He is not dead now, but——" and Warden stopped, then gazed curiously at his questioner. "But what do you ask for? You are one of those cowardly devils who have done it."

"I came here meaning to kill him; I have plotted against him, never knowing who he was; but when I saw him I knew, and I would have died instead, gladly. You ask me why I show so much interest in him. I tell you I am his father—his father, and I have plotted to murder him!"

"His father!" Warden echoed. "Then Heaven forgive you! You are telling me the truth!" with a searching glance. "Yes, I see you are. I can do nothing for you now; I must go to Blake—and you must go to prison with the rest."

He did not answer, but held out his wrists in silence for the handcuffs, and submitted to be led away, while Warden went slowly and sadly to the room which he feared Blake would never leave alive again.

CHAPTER VIII.

It was the afternoon of the next day, and Mrs. O'Hara rapidly passed through the down-trodden garden and up the stone steps where still some blood-stains showed themselves. As she opened the door the doctor was coming downstairs.

"How is he?" she questioned eagerly. "Is he conscious?"

"He is conscious," he answered gravely, "but he is sinking fast."

She clasped her hands together with a shudder.

"There is no hope, then?"

"I fear not," and the doctor sighed as he spoke.

She left him and hurried upstairs to her son's room. Warden was with him, but he went away on her entrance, and mother and son were alone.

Desmond looked up with a smile as she sat down beside him.

"Has the doctor told you?"

"Yes. Oh, Demie, my boy, to think that you should die like this, so young, with the best part of your life before you! It——"

"Hush, mother, I will tell you something! I don't want to live; I would rather die. There, you must not ask me why. Only don't be very sorry for me; I am perfectly content. Where have you been now?"

Mrs. O'Hara looked at him steadily.

"I have been to the prison. Oh, Demie, I have something so strange to tell you, and I don't know how to do it!"

"To the prison!" he echoed. "But what for? Whom have you been to see?"

"I have been to see one of the men who was arrested here last night," she said, bending down and taking his hand as she spoke. "Some one who was once very dear to me. Oh, Demie, it is so awful! He was concerned in the plot against you, never knowing who you were——"

"But his name? Who is he?" cried Desmond.

"My husband—your father, Demie!" she said wildly, as he dropped her hand, and the old look of hatred that she knew so well came on his face. "You shall listen to me. You shall hear what I have to tell you!"

Desmond laughed bitterly.

"Yes, I must listen! And you have been to see him, have pitied him, and sympathised with him; and, after all, he is one of those who have brought me to this!"

"He had no hand in harming you. He tried to stop them when he recognised you, even after all these years, as his son. He is nearly mad from remorse and grief at having been connected ever so slightly with this horrible plot. Oh, Desmond, have mercy! He will be hung, as the others will, if you do not save him!"

"Save him! I have only a few more hours to live; how could I save him? And he deserves to be hung; why should I concern myself about him? Mother, mother, how can you love him still? Look at his conduct to you, his desertion of us, the life he has led, must have led, to be mixed up with these men!"

"I know, I know!" she sobbed. "And yet, Demie, he is my husband, and I love him even now. Demie, he is sorry, he is repentant! As you are dying, as you hope to go to heaven, give him back to me now! There must be some way."

Desmond lay silently thinking, and exhausted too. His strength was ebbing fast, he could hardly concentrate his thoughts on what his mother was saying.

"As I hope to go to heaven," he repeated dreamily. "Mother, I will help you. What can I do?"

She looked at him as if doubting whether he really meant it.

"You will?" she said. "Oh, Damie, thank Heaven! You forgive him now, you have put aside the old hatred?"

"I will put it aside," he said with a smile. "Give me a sheet of paper and pencil, and then raise me up."

Quickly she brought them, and then watched with a fierce pain at her heart the difficulty with which those once strong fingers traced the few words:

"I declare that the man Desmond O'Hara, at present detained in prison charged with having aided in the attack made upon me last night, is innocent of that charge. He did all in his power to save my life. I request that he shall be at once set free. "DESMOND BLAKE."

The pencil fell from his hand, and he lay back on his pillows and gave her the paper.

"There, that is all I can do. I think—I hope that it will be enough. Are you satisfied now, mother? How strange it seems, does it not, that I, who have hated him all these years so bitterly, should now be the only man who can save him, if not from death, from imprisonment? Go to him now, mother, give that paper to the first official you see, and tell him that it is to be attended to immediately. I know you will not be at rest till he is free."

"But you," she said. "I cannot leave you, Damie."

"Never mind about me," said Desmond with a smile. "I shall be here when you come back."

She rose doubtfully, love for her husband and love for her son struggling in her mind. But Desmond's smile reassured her.

"I shall not be long, then." She hesitated, and then went on: "Won't you send him a message, Demie? If only you knew how grieved he is! Just that you forgive him!"

"Yes, tell him that," said Desmond, "that I forgive him. Now go, mother. Good-bye. Come back to me soon."

Half an hour afterwards she re-entered the house, breathless from her haste, tired, yet with a feeling of glad relief, for the husband of her youth was given back to her, and even her grief for her son could not stifle the joy and happiness of that reunion. She even fancied, in her new-born hope, that Desmond might not be so ill as they thought. Doctors were not always infallible; surely Desmond, with

his splendid health and constitution, could not die as they predicted. But as she came into the hall and met Warden there, she only saw that he looked grave and sorrowful.

She clutched his arm wildly.

"Oh, tell me! How is he? Why do you look like that?"

"He is dead!" Warden answered simply.

Late that night Frank Warden came out of the Longford station and made his way rapidly towards Mara's house. Yes, she was there, the servants told him, in the drawing-room.

The door was open, and looking in, he saw Mara in the dim lamplight. She held a book in her hand, but she was not reading; her eyes were gazing away into space, and her face looked aged and worn even in the short time since he had seen her.

"Mara!" he said, and she sprang up and came towards him with an exclamation of surprise.

"You have come, then. How I have longed to be out of this suspense! And now I dare not ask you what——"

"You will not be startled at what I have to tell you," he said bitterly. "I know that I need not with you strive to warn and prepare for bad news. He is dead, Mara!"

A cry rang through the room.

"Oh, not dead! Frank, I thought you would save him! It cannot be true! Frank, Frank, don't let me think that I am his murderess! Say that it is not my fault—that I could not have saved him!"

He looked down at her unmoved; he was judging her more hardly than she deserved, for he thought that her grief was all a splendid piece of acting.

"It is a pity that your remorse comes so late. Mara, you have had no hand in his death, yet morally, if not actually, you have been his murderess! I, too, Heaven forgive me! If I had never loved you, Mara, he might have been alive now!"

He paused and looked at her; she had thrown herself on the sofa, her face hidden in her hands. Then a rush of the old chivalry to woman, that is innate in every true man, came over him. Had he misjudged her now; had he spoken too harshly? He went up to her and knelt by her side.

"Mara, we have both erred, bitterly erred. This awful punishment of remorse comes to both of us alike. Forgive me for the words I have said to you; the events of this last horrible day and night have shaken me so that I hardly know what I

say. Mara, there may be peace in store for us yet. Let us bear this burden together, it will be easier than alone."

Mara lifted her head, and he saw that her eyes were full of tears.

"No," she said sadly, "that can never be, Frank. Happiness nor peace either can never come to us together. You are sorry for me now you see that what I am suffering now is almost hard enough punishment for what I have done, but in years to come you would think of the past, and you would curse yourself for having married such as I. Listen to me, Frank; don't stop me for a minute. I have never loved you; never, not even when I came to you yesterday at the peril of my good name; I never loved my husband. I married him because I was poor, and saw no chance of marrying any one better; I came to you yesterday, I have feigned to be in love with you all along—because you are rich. Oh, Frank, I see now, when it is too late, what my life has been, and what I might have made it! Do you wonder that the knowledge is almost crushing me?"

Warden was silent at first, and then he rose from his chair, and held out his hand.

"You are right," he said. "I do not believe that happiness could ever come to us together. I will leave you—and yet—Mara, I never loved you as I do at this moment! Now, when your past life, your character, your faults, are bare before me, I love you better than I ever did! I would forgive the faults, I would forget the past, if you were my wife!"

She shook her head.

"No. That past will ever haunt us both. Frank, don't let us prolong this scene, it is only pain to both of us. Go! leave me, and pray to heaven that we may never meet again!"

He held both her hands, he looked down with a last long look at her lovely, sorrowful face, and then with a sudden impulse, he framed it in his hands and kissed it for the last time.

"Good-bye!" and the next moment she was alone, while Frank Warden went out into the starlit night, knowing well that in all human probability, his path in life would never again cross that of the woman he had just left. With all her faults,

with hardly a true feeling or noble impulse in her nature, Mara yet had one supreme attribute which many better women lack—the power of gaining and holding till death the hearts of the men who loved her.

EPILOGUE.

A LARGE ship dropped slowly away from the Belfast Docks and out to sea. Its passengers were talking and laughing, forming into merry groups, making friends with each other even at this early stage of the voyage, and apart from the rest, leaning over the vessel's side with their eyes on the receding shore, were two people, a man with a face still handsome in spite of its lines and haggardness, and a woman in deep mourning.

What were they leaving behind them, that they looked back at the shore so long and so fixedly? They had neither friends nor kindred, neither hopes nor interests in the old world; the one thing that bound them to it, where the thoughts of both were now, was a grave far away in Kerry, bearing the name, "Desmond Blake."

The ship travelled on, the shore grew faint and misty, and as its last outline faded those two turned away with a sigh. Let them go—go on to that New World before them, there to seek for, and perchance to find, happiness and prosperity.

Wherever they may be, even though that lonely grave is forsaken and neglected, they will never forget Desmond Blake.

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MISS LATIMER OF BRYANS.

BY ELEANOR C. PRICE.

Author of "Alexia," "Red Towers," "The Little One," etc.

CHAPTER XXVII. NEW SITUATIONS.

"HERE you are, old boy! I thought you were lost."

Lucy Thorne stood at the door and thus welcomed her brother Geoffrey coming slowly in the dusk through the garden.

"So I am!" he muttered, and was going straight into the house; but she caught him in the doorway. He looked past her into the light, which shone on his face and showed it dreamy and strange, rather like that of a man who is walking in his sleep.

The two collies lying on the hearth looked up and pricked their ears; one gave a slight growl, the other moved his tail. Perceiving that this was no business of theirs, they lay down again in the fire-light, and sighed contentedly. Mr. Thorne was asleep in his chair; Frank was not in the room.

"What's the matter, Geoff? You have found out something!" said Lucy, and putting her two hands on his shoulders, she pushed him back on the pavement. "Tell me here. Father is asleep. You don't mean to say——"

"Don't bother! What do you mean?"

"You have found out something?" Lucy repeated. "Who told you? Mr. Cantillon? It's true, anyhow, from your face."

"No, I have found out nothing. I did not mention it to Mr. Cantillon. How can you say it is true! You are as bad as Stokes himself. Let me come in. I must speak to my father."

"Not till you have told me what is the matter," said Lucy positively.

She pushed him further from the door, and pulled it gently after her. They stood together in the garden, but it was not dark, for the large window threw a square of ruddy light upon the damp pavement and dusky rose-bushes.

"Where have you been all this time? Have you seen the Rector—or Captain Nugent? What have you done? Why do you look like that? Have you seen a ghost, or what has happened to you? What have you heard? Answer me this moment, Geoffrey."

Her brother laughed, and with a violent effort pulled himself together. In his shadowy walk through the fields and the dark plantations, all that had happened at Church Corner had begun to feel like a bad dream. Almost directly after his parting with Maggie, the whole story seemed unreal. No reason, surely, could have been strong enough to take his life from him and give it into the hands of that girl. It could not be true; the change was too sudden and too great. Now Lucy's voice, and the clutch of her hands, turned the numbness of disbelief into tolerably sharp pain. But Geoffrey knew at the same time that he must inevitably take the consequence of his own actions, and begin at once to live the life he had chosen. He must be loyal to Maggie now; and it was better to tell Lucy at once. The whole thing would seem easier, perhaps, when it was openly talked about. He did not realise, of course—men never do—what the news would be to his sister.

"I'll tell you one thing," he said, "and that will answer all your questions. You told me what to do with that rose—don't you remember? Well, I've done it."

"You have done it! What in the world do you mean?"

Lucy trembled. She looked at his coat, and saw even in that dimness that the rose was not there.

"You mean, Geoff——" she said, her voice falling oddly.

"Well, I know you only meant it for chaff, but I thought it over, and it seemed the best thing. Don't you see, it makes all safe, and pleases everybody. There, you will keep my secret, and everybody else will think it quite natural, just as old Mr. Farrant does, and my father will, I dare say. And you'll be good to her, Lucy—she has had a worried sort of life; I said I would try to make her happy. It will be better for her than being left out in the cold. Perhaps she thought so herself."

"Oh, Geoff! Geoff!"

"Don't you see, it settles everything," he said, turning away. "All must go straight now. And look here, let us never allude to that again, even between ourselves. This will stop everything, and silence everybody. No one will quite understand, except you, and you have got to keep the secret, and be good to her. That's all."

"And enough too," said Lucy very low. "Stop everything! Then there was something to be stopped!"

"I did not say so," he replied quickly.

"No, I don't believe it. But there are plenty of reasons without that."

Lucy was silent.

"I must tell my father," said Geoffrey. "Mr. Farrant wants to see him."

"What reasons—what reasons can there be?" his sister broke out passionately. "Why, in heaven's name, should you throw yourself away on a girl utterly inferior to you, when you don't love her, and she doesn't love you, and it can do no good to anybody on earth? If you could make me understand the reasons—find me one single good one—I might be able to bear it. But that silly, foolish, concealed——Oh, Geoff, Geoff! It is simple madness! One of these days, mark my words, you will bitterly repent it. Do you mean to say that it is settled—that you have asked her this afternoon, and she has said 'yes'?"

"Yes, it is all settled, so what is the use——"

"Oh, no use—no use at all! I know that. But you did not expect me to pretend to be pleased, did you? Give me a good reason; that is all I ask."

"My reasons are my own affair."

"Oh, of course they are. You are rather less reasonable now than when you tore off abroad after Miss Latimer's engagement, and when I thought you had taken that revolver and meant to shoot yourself. Upon my word, I could almost say you had better have done it. Better die than live like a fool. My belief is that that girl has got into some awful scrape, and just catches at you to help her out of it."

"Then your belief is wrong. You are very unfair, Lucy."

"But why have you done it? Why—why—why?"

"Answer your own question," Geoffrey said, after a minute's pause. "However, most people who know Miss Farrant won't find it so hard to understand, luckily for me."

"It depends whether they know you," said Lucy.

They had moved away from the door, and were pacing up and down the flagged path together, talking in low, cautious tones. Lucy felt strangely as if something was choking her; but to her tears were almost unknown.

"Did you think I should be pleased?" she said sharply, after another painful silence.

"I don't know. I thought you would be good to me, and understand."

The choking became worse; to Lucy's horror, two scalding tears rolled down. Luckily it was dark, and Geoffrey could not see.

"Understand!" she muttered in uncertain tones. "How can anybody understand who is not as mad and foolish as yourself? There—don't speak to me. I'm going in. Look, father is awake; go and talk to him. Have your own way, for I've done with you. But, Geoffrey, if you have done this for Miss Latimer, she will have a weight on her conscience which I should not care to carry. This means the out-and-out ruin of your life. She began it, and she has finished it. Surely she had everything she could wish or want, without the sacrifice of you as well."

"Don't talk like that!" cried Geoffrey, as if she had hurt him.

Lucy went into the house without another word. She dashed across the room with a white face, and Mr. Thorne, who was used to her moods, scarcely noticed anything. Geoffrey followed her quietly in, and began at once in deliberate tones, standing before the fire:

"Father, I have something to tell you."

Between eleven and twelve o'clock the next day Poppy Latimer was reading a letter in her sitting-room window. She stood with her back to the door, so absorbed that Arthur opened it, walked lightly across the room, and was standing close beside her before she was aware of his presence. Even then the smile with which she looked up was not all for him.

"I am so glad," she said; but her eyes were dim, and a tear ran suddenly down and fell on the letter.

"What is there to be glad about? You don't quite look as if you were," said Arthur caressingly.

As he stood close to her shoulder, his eyes could hardly help falling on the sheet of rather childish handwriting which she held in her hand.

"My dearest Poppy," he read aloud. "What infant writes to you in that familiar style?"

At the same moment his eyes idly followed the lines a little further, and as they did so his face changed. A flush stole into it slowly, and he bit his lips under his long moustache. For an instant he looked very grave, then smiled, and regained his composure.

"You can read it, dear," said Poppy. "At least, I suppose the child only meant it for me. Do you see? It is from Maggie—the news of her engagement to Geoffrey Thorne."

"Well, and you are glad?" said Arthur.

He turned away and sat down in a corner of the large sofa close by, half shading his face with his hand as he leaned on the cushions and looked up at Poppy.

"Oh, yes, very glad. The letter does not seem—well, not quite so happy as—as I should like it to be. But she would not know exactly how to express herself, perhaps. She seems to imply that she has been rather driven into it, but that is impossible. Her grandfather wished it very much, I know, and was very anxious about her. He told me so. I don't know why she should say, 'I thought my life was in my own hands, but I find it is not.' Rather odd—rather silly, isn't it? Geoffrey Thorne is so good and large-minded; he is the last person to wish to marry her against her will. You and Aunt Fanny were right about him, you see, Arthur. He must have had this in his head for some time. Well, I am very glad.

But I wish I felt quite sure that they care enough for each other."

"He cares, you may be sure, or why should he have done it?" said Arthur quietly. "She will be all right, poor little soul. Of course she is too good for him; but things right themselves in time. He is a clever fellow, by Jove. There's the old man's money, too. You had better tell him that his luck is more than he deserves, and that he has got to make her happy if he can."

"I don't think you quite appreciate my friend Geoffrey Thorne. Mr. Cantillon likes him immensely, you know."

"Oh, yes, I quite appreciate him. I value him tremendously high. I think him much cleverer than Otto does, but I think he will bore your friend to tears."

"Girls are not so easily bored as that," said Poppy; and she could not at all understand why Arthur flung himself back on the sofa cushions and burst out laughing.

It was not to be expected, of course, that he would quite enter into all her feeling about this engagement of Maggie's. She was really glad, very glad, in a quiet, subdued way. Her trust in Geoffrey told her that she need have no more anxiety about the girl who had lately become, simply through circumstances, rather more of a burden than a happiness in her life. Yet the tone of Maggie's letter made her a little uneasy. She wondered that Maggie had chosen to write, rather than to tell her face to face. In fact, now that the lady of Bryans had her way with these two vassals, it did not give her an unmixed feeling of satisfaction. Arthur's opinion, of course, was of no real consequence. He knew both of them so slightly that he could be no judge of the future. Yet the way in which the news had struck him was a vague but real element in Poppy's hardly confessed uneasiness. She missed the sympathy which had till now been so freely given to all her plans and fancies, successes and disappointments.

After luncheon they went out for a stroll with the dogs, and Mrs. Nugent joined them, Miss Fanny Latimer having driven off alone to pay a tiresome visit in the neighbourhood. She meant to call at the Rector's door and tell him how delighted she was with the latest news, finding out at the same time whether any gratitude was due to him. This she rather suspected, and was not inclined to grudge him his reward.

As the others loitered down the avenue Arthur was a little silent and languid. He complained of the smell of the dead leaves, shivered, and said he hated November. In fact, England in autumn and winter was unbearable.

"And in spring?" said his mother.

"Impossible in spring. Out of the question."

Poppy lifted her eyes and laughed, for she thought he was in fun.

"You will like it when you are stronger," she said.

"No. Can't bear the cold," said Arthur.

"But hunting, and shooting—and skating."

"My dear Poppy, I am not a barbarian. So sorry for your sake."

Mrs. Nugent interposed with a laugh and changed the subject. Knowing that Arthur was right about himself, she did not wish him to enlarge on his humours to Poppy. She would find out enough later on. And to-day even his mother could not understand what had upset Arthur's usual serenity. He was certainly cross and discontented—more so even than he had been in London with her, though he did not show it so openly.

But Poppy appeared to notice nothing. Presently she said:

"Do you mind my leaving you for a little? May I, Mrs. Nugent, as you have Arthur? I want to go and see Maggie, instead of writing to her. It will be nicer for both of us, I think."

"Certainly, my dear," Mrs. Nugent answered quickly.

"Yes, Poppy. You are right, as usual," said the young man. "We can go with you through the wood."

"And the dead leaves, dear?" suggested his mother: a remark to which he made no reply.

They walked rather silently through the wood. When they reached the gate into the lane, Arthur stepped forward to open it, and Mrs. Nugent saw an extraordinary change come into his face. He flushed slightly, his eyes seemed to darken and flash, and the discontented look which he had worn for the last hour deepened into something very like a scowl. Mrs. Nugent glanced hastily at Poppy, and was glad to see that her eyes were not, as usual, following Arthur, but that she was looking down through branches and lingering leaves in the same direction. The next instant Mrs. Nugent saw a girl's figure coming up the green lane.

Poppy went forward at once, took both Maggie's hands, and kissed her.

"Were you coming to me, dear?" she said.

Maggie muttered something in answer, hardly looking up, and in the same down-cast way shook hands with Mrs. Nugent and Arthur.

"Come along, mother," he said, and in answer to Poppy's parting smile he lifted his hat hurriedly as he walked away.

Once he turned round and looked after the two girls as they strolled slowly down the lane, Poppy with her hand on Maggie's shoulder. Then he began to whistle gently as he followed his mother along the road. Mrs. Nugent found it amusing to prolong her walk a little; she was tired of the wood and the avenue.

"I'm afraid this place is getting rather cold for you, Arthur," she said, after a few minutes' silence.

"Yes, it's a beastly climate," he answered rather absently.

"When are Otto and Alice coming?"

"On Saturday."

"And do I understand that the others can't come—your friends, I mean?"

"They won't come. Lawson evidently thinks it will be too slow, and doesn't believe in the shooting. Scott has some stupid reason or other. But Lawson is a wise man. It would be slow, I can tell you, for anybody who wasn't going to be married to it. Nothing whatever to amuse anybody. I'm glad they won't come."

"I suppose there is as much amusement as in other country places."

"No; I don't think there is."

"My dear boy, something is a little wrong. What is it?"

"Wrong! I don't know what you mean."

"Arthur, I am sure Poppy is everything—"

"Everything—and a great deal more."

"Then you don't feel so well," said Mrs. Nugent, not quite liking the tone of his last words, though in themselves they were unexceptionable.

"I feel just the same. There is nothing to make a fuss about. Everything is just the same."

Mrs. Nugent did not think so, but she walked a little way in silence. At last she said:

"Do you dislike that girl very much, Arthur? Has dear Poppy bored you with her at all? It will be all right now that she is going to be married."

"What can have put that into your head?" growled Arthur, in a very much crosser tone than he had used yet.

"Your face, my dear, when you opened the gate and saw her coming. You frowned and looked furious."

Arthur tried to laugh at this.

"I wish you wouldn't be always studying my face," he said. "Was Poppy looking at me too?"

"No, I don't think she was."

"It doesn't matter," he said, "for Poppy is not subject to fancies."

"She is a noble creature," said Mrs. Nugent earnestly. "It was not exactly fancy on my part, however. You don't know anything against the girl?"

"I—nothing, of course. Poppy has let herself be worried, but—it will be all right now, as you say. Frown! I didn't frown. Why should I? The light or the shadows must have deceived you."

He spoke uncomfortably; he was not a very good actor, and his mother was left with a haunting sensation of discomfort, a faint, troublesome suspicion of she hardly knew what. It was not weakened by Arthur's hurrying on to say that he supposed they could go away when Otto and Alice went, even if they had to come back after Christmas for a time.

"I suppose we must do that," said Mrs. Nugent. "You must, at least. There is this idea of the ball."

"That may come to nothing," he said. "But don't say anything against it to Poppy, because she rather likes the notion."

They had turned through the churchyard, and were walking in the beech avenue which led towards Sutton Bryans, when they suddenly met Geoffrey Thorne and his father, striding along at a great pace towards the village. Neither they nor the Nugents had any wish to stop and speak, passing with a salutation which was cold enough.

"The artist does not look particularly happy," said Mrs. Nugent.

"Didn't you think so?" Arthur answered indifferently. "Perhaps I ought to have congratulated him."

"He did not look as if he wished it."

On the west side of the Bryans Court garden there was a long gravelled terrace, with large red pots set at intervals, and a low wall half covered with ivy. It was screened from the rest of the garden by trees and box hedges, and had a long view

of its own down the slopes of the park, away to distant fields that rose against the sunset.

Poppy's tastes were so much more active than contemplative that she had never cared to spend time on this terrace, though it had many associations, from the days when she used to drive her hoop up and down it to those when her mother, in failing health, was drawn in her chair along the even gravel. Once or twice, in the early days of Arthur's visit, Poppy had walked there with him. But he seemed to agree with her in preferring more distant wanderings, explorings of the country as yet so unfamiliar. And somehow, though Poppy was not conscious of it, he rather resigned himself to long solitary talks with her than sought out opportunities for them.

But when she came back that afternoon from the visit to Maggie Farrant, she walked away to the terrace and paced up and down there in a rather troubled and bewildered state of mind.

There could not, it seemed, be a more fortunate woman, or one who had her own way more triumphantly. From this high point in her garden she could look on nothing that was not hers. Not only lands and trees, but hearts were hers too. She had the devotion of her friends, great and small; she was to marry the man she would have chosen out of the world. And yet the autumn afternoon, with its grey overshadowing canopy, and that band of gold in the west, with dark purple trees breaking it, where the sun was going down—all peaceful, all as usual, and like happy afternoons before—seemed to have brought a new sadness to Poppy as she stood alone on her terrace.

She had come back from Maggie with a conviction that troubled her, that the girl was not as happy as herself, or as she ought to be. Why, then, if she did not care for him, had she promised to marry Geoffrey Thorne?

Poppy knew, or thought she knew, that no pressure had been used on either side. No one, she felt sure, had even suggested the idea to Geoffrey; and she knew old Mr. Farrant too well to think that, with all his talk, he would tyrannise over Maggie so far. Besides, the girl had far too much spirit and character to be disposed of without her own wish and consent.

Poppy tried to persuade herself that the girl was excitable, and that she ought not to have expected her to be quite natural,

quite like her own childish, affectionate self, in the first hours of her engagement.

Another thing puzzled her, and perhaps more seriously than Maggie's own manner with its something half sad, half flighty. This was the grave stiffness with which Geoffrey Thorne had behaved when, leaving his father with Mr. Farrant, he had come down to join her and Maggie in the garden. His face had changed at sight of her; his whole bearing seemed to harden into a kind of obstinate shyness. He was very unlike the old Geoffrey of Herzheim, or the friend who had thrown himself for her among the horses' feet in Paris, or the eager though quiet artist who had worked for her at Maggie's picture. Poppy was not at all accustomed to finding herself in the way; but certainly these two, who were going to fulfil one of her greatest wishes by marrying each other, had managed that afternoon to create an atmosphere in which she could not comfortably breathe. She had left them very soon, conscious of a surprise and coldness in herself which might finally have been betrayed in her manner.

A slight flush tinted her pale cheeks as she thought of it, and the stateliest of her ancestors would not have been ashamed of Porphyria, as she stood there on the terrace and paid for her generous human nature, as such people often do, in a kind of incredulous disappointment, angry with herself the next moment for unfairness. A little sharper pain came with the thought that this was a thing she could hardly talk over with Arthur. To begin with, her impressions were too vague to be talked about at all. Then she would not complain, even to him, of those two old friends of hers. Finally, though this could hardly be confessed, she was not sure of his sympathy. He had been strange to-day. Yesterday, too, there had been something a little wrong—something that gave her a pang of fear. Would all that she could give him be always enough to make him happy? Then she smiled at her own foolishness, but the "little rift" was there.

Then came a voice out of her old life, sweet and ringing, and it called "Poppy, Poppy!" from the lawn beyond the trees.

She started with surprise, for it was Aunt Fanny's voice, and she did not expect her back till an hour later.

"Here I am," she cried, and she hurried on to meet the little lady, who came through the trees with a face all smiles, and a happy, nervous manner.

As Poppy met her she broke into a small peal of laughter.

"What is it? Has anything happened?" said the girl.

"Kiss me first. Oh, Poppy, I'm younger than you. My poor child, to have such news twice in one day! You don't want to lose me, do you?"

"Lose you!" repeated Poppy, turning pale.

It seemed to her sad mood, just then, that Aunt Fanny was all she had left; but she gave no hint of this feeling.

"I came first to you," said her aunt, holding her hand. "My dear, don't be angry with me. When you are married I shall be left alone, shan't I? And I think this time it would be lonely. And he is such a dear—and the feeling of perfect trust—of course we have always cared for each other, only so many things have come between us—beautiful, unselfish things on his part, I am sure. Say you are glad, darling!"

"Mr. Cantillon?"

"Of course, dearest. He thinks you must have seen long ago."

"I never did," sighed Poppy.

There was a catch in her breath, and, to tell the truth of this dignified woman, she would very much have liked to throw her arms round her aunt's neck and cry on her shoulder. But this was impossible, and in a moment she was herself again.

"Dear Aunt Fan, I am delighted," she said, and she kissed her again with warm but calm affection. "Yes, delighted. He is perfect, and the wisest and the luckiest man! Then you never got to the Grahams?"

"My dear, I am ashamed!"

"I am delighted."

They strolled up and down for half an hour, while the gold band deepened in colour, and the world glowed with beauty before darkness settled down. There were certainly two happy people in the world, Poppy confessed with pleasure. There was no ache in it, for the marriage would not be till after Poppy's own.

They talked till Arthur's tall, slight figure came loitering through the trees. A little tired with his walk, a little bored by his mother's remarks, he was looking lazily for Poppy.

"Don't tell him just yet," Miss Fanny Latimer whispered. "We don't want anybody to know yet."

Her niece half unwillingly said: "Very well."

CONCERNING SOME GOOD THINGS.

I THINK that the most inveterate diner-out in the days of the Regency, and of George the Fourth, was the bird-like, chirruping little Bard of Erin, Thomas Moore. Fortunately for a posterity that loves to be amused, he has left a very entertaining and yet faithful record of the dinners he attended. It extends over a wider space of years than I can hope to follow; and as our admirable little poet was always on the wing, he pecked at such a number of different dinner-tables that to enumerate even a moderate proportion of them would be impossible. But at some of the best I will glance, for the convenience of the reader who wants either the leisure or the patience, or both, to wade through the eight volumes of "Journal and Correspondence" so indifferently edited by the late Earl Russell.

Sometimes Moore himself was host. Thus he writes: "Our company to dinner: Lord Granard, Lady Adelaide, Lady Caroline, Lord John [Russell], Luttrell, Fazzakerley, and Villamil. The day very agreeable. Luttrell in good spirits, and highly amusing; told of an Irishman, who, having jumped into the water to save a man from drowning, upon receiving sixpence from the person as a reward for the service, looked first at the sixpence, then at him, and at last exclaimed, 'By Jasus, I'm over-paid for the job.' Lord John told us that Bolus Smith one day, in conversation with Talleyrand, having brought in somehow the beauty of his mother, Talleyrand said, 'C'étoit donc votre père qui n'étoit pas bien' (then it was your father who was ugly)."

Dining at Bowood, he meets with Lords John Russell, Holland, Thanet, and Trimlestown; Baron de Foin, Denon, Luttrell, and Concannon. Some good stories are told. A man asked another to come and dine off boiled beef and potatoes with him. "That I will," says the other, "and it's rather odd it should be exactly the same dinner I had at home for myself—barring the beef." Denon spoke of a man who, having been asked repeatedly to dinner by a person whom he knew to be but a shabby Amphitryon, went at last, and found the dinner so meagre and bad that he did not get a bit to eat. When the dishes were removing the host said: "Well, now the ice is broken, I suppose you will ask me to dine with you some

day." "Most willingly." "Name your day, then." "Anjourd'hui, par exemple," answered the dinnerless guest.

There is a good story of Lord Justice Ellenborough which Moore hears when dining with Lord Lansdowne at Bowood. Lord — yawning during his own speech, Ellenborough exclaimed: "Come, come, the fellow does show some symptoms of taste, but this is encroaching on our province."

One envies Moore's dining-out powers, and the opportunities he enjoyed of exercising them. Let us take a single fortnight and muse over the dinners he ate, and the men and women he met, and the bon-mots he must have heard. Thursday at Lady Donegal's; Friday at Rees', the publisher's; Saturday at the Artists' Benevolent Fund along with the poet Campbell, who was also a pretty good diner-out; Sunday at Lord Listowel's; Monday at Lady Jersey's, where he meets the Duke of Wellington, Earl Grey, and the Marquis of Hertford (Thackeray's Marquis of Steyne); Tuesday Lord Auckland's; Wednesday at the Literary Fund; Thursday at Lady Donegal's; Friday at Longman's; Saturday at Baring's; Sunday at Sir Francis Chantry the sculptor's; Monday at Rogers's, where he meets the celebrated vocalist, Miss Stephens (afterwards Countess of Essex), and the art patrons, Sir George Beaumont and Sir George Warrender; Tuesday at Lansdowne House, where he meets Sydney Smith, Agar Ellis, Lord and Lady Cawdor, and hears Madame Pasta sing; and Wednesday dines alone (for the first time) at Bedford Coffee House. Was ever poet so petted and patronised before? Did ever poet (except in imagination) partake of so much good cheer?

This is one of his evenings: "Obliged to dress early for Lord Belgrave's. Lord Lansdowne sent his carriage for me at ten minutes before five; when I came to take him up found that Lady Lansdowne could not accompany us, her sister was so ill. Company at Lord B.'s, the Cawdors, Mr. Granville, and ourselves. To the play, 'Paul Pry' [by Poole]; very amusing, but had heard too much of it: many of our party had seen it before, and still laughed heartily, which was no small tribute. Came away after the play; left at home by the Cawdors and sallied out again for Mrs. Shirley's assembly; heard Isabella Houlton play her wild Spanish airs, and came away with the Wilsons, who set me down at Lady Jersey's, where I did little

more than make my bow, and then set off for Mrs. Coutts's [formerly Harriet Mellon the actress, afterwards Duchess of St. Alban's] ball, where I found quadrilles going on in one room, and Braham and Miss Stephens singing in another."

It was impossible that under such conditions Moore could do justice to his poetic gifts, and accomplish any work worthy of immortality. He frittered away his time on good company and his genius on ephemeral compositions such as "Lalla Rookh" and "The Loves of the Angels," and hence already he is nearly forgotten; the majority even of his songs, some of which are exquisite in form and expression, ceasing to retain a place in the memories of men. While he was thus fluttering to and fro in the world of fashion, like a bird in a gilded cage, his charming wife, his Bessy, whom he really loved after his manner, was left at home in dull seclusion to darn her children's socks and struggle against pecuniary difficulties.

On one occasion Moore dines at Agar Ellis's; company, Lord and Lady Harewood and the Archbishop of York (rampant Tories), Sydney Smith, Lord and Lady Clifton, etc. Sits next Sydney Smith, and opposite Lord Harewood and the Archbishop—an odd conjunction of signs. In the evening Moore sings a good deal—he had a small but sweet voice, capable of great expression, and accompanied himself with much taste—among other things, his rebel song, "Oh, where's the Slave?" which enables the incorrigible Sydney to poke fun at the Archbishop as turning, under the influence of Moore's singing, into a rebel. "But it's fast subsiding," he says; "his Grace is relapsing into loyalty; if you don't sing another song you'll lose him." As Sydney and Moore go home, the latter remarks how well and good-humouredly Ellis had mixed them all up together, and Sydney replies: "That's the great use of a good conversational cook, who says to his company, 'I'll make a good pudding of you'; it's no matter what you come into the bowl, you must come out a pudding. 'Dear me,' says one of the ingredients, 'wasn't I just now an egg?' but he feels the batter sticking to him," etc., etc. There cannot be a moment's doubt that the success of a dinner from an intellectual point of view depends on the giver's skill as a host; on the dexterity with which he assort and blends together his guests; on the tact with which he affords each an opportunity

of scintillating in his turn. A dinner of stalled herbs, with wise and witty talk, felicitously seasoned and genially mixed, is superior to the high feasts of a Carême or an Ude, when this agreeable accompaniment is wanting. But to secure such a result, not only must the host understand his duties, he must limit the number of his guests. The rule of antiquity was not fewer than the three Graces, nor more than the nine Muses; but perhaps a mean between the two is the rule of perfection. Nowadays our dinners are spoiled by being overcrowded. The guests expand into a mob—a multitude, without harmony or order—and conversation becomes impossible.

One would have liked to be a guest at the dinner at Miss White's, at which, besides Moore, Hallam was present, and Sharpe, and Hobhouse, and Luttrell, and Captains (Sir Francis) Head and Denham—the latter the African traveller. Afterwards came Sir Walter Scott, his daughter, and the Lockharts. One can fancy how brilliant must have been the play of fancy and of wit; yet Moore preserves only a couple of *bons-mots*, and both by Luttrell. Head was describing the use of the lasso in catching men as well as animals. Yes, said Luttrell, the first syllable had caught many a man. Reference was made to a club founded by a Mr. Ashe, and somebody remarked that a son of that Ashe was then chairman of it. "Still in its Ashes live their wonted fires," ejaculated Luttrell.

The dietetic vagaries of Lord Byron are sufficiently well known. They were prompted partly by an exaggerated dread of corpulence; partly by a capricious temper; and partly by a miserable vanity, for even in the matter of food Byron wished to show that he was not as other men. The first time he dined with Moore and Rogers, at the table of the latter, his host was mortified to find that there was nothing his noble guest could eat or drink. He asked for biscuits and soda-water, but these had not been included in the menu; and eventually he made his dinner—and a hearty one—off potatoes and vinegar. It is difficult to believe that this abstemiousness, which rivalled that of the old hermits of the "Thebald," was not a bit of "play-acting." As much may be said of his custom at his Newstead Abbey dinners of passing round among his guests, when the cloth was removed, a human skull filled with Burgundy. Was it for the same

purpose as that of the Egyptians when they exhibited a skeleton at their feasts? Byron, when he liked, could relish a good dinner; and his fame as a poet, his rank, and the adventitious romance of his career, making him a welcome guest in London circles, he had abundant opportunities of testing the skill of the best chefs in the metropolis.

That he did not always adhere to his anchorite fare he himself admits. When at Middleton, the Earl of Jersey's seat, amongst a goodly company of lords, ladies, and wits, he records that: "Chester, the fox-hunter, and I sweated the claret, being the only two who did so. Chester, who loves his bottle, and had no notion of meeting a bon vivant in a scribbler, in making my eulogy to somebody one evening, summed it up in, 'By Heaven, he drinks like a man!' Nobody drank, however, but Chester and I. To be sure, there was little occasion, for we swept off what was on the table—a most splendid board, as may be supposed, at Jersey's—very sufficiently. However, we 'carried our liquor discreetly,' like the Baron of Bradwardine."

At Holland House Byron was a frequent visitor; at Rogers's; at Sir Humphrey Davy's; at Sir Gilbert Heathcote's. Once he dined with Leigh Hunt in Horsemonger Lane Gaol, where that accomplished man of letters was undergoing imprisonment for an alleged libel on the Prince Regent—"a fat Adonis of forty." The other guest was Mitchell, the able translator of Aristophanes. Dining with Lord Holland, in St. James's Square, he meets Sir Samuel and Lady Romilly, Lord John Russell, Granville Sharpe, and Francis Horner. "Holland's society," he writes, "is very good; you always see some one or other in it worth knowing. Stuffed myself with sturgeon, and exceeded in champagne and wine in general, but not to confusion of head. When I do dine, I gorge like an Arab or a boa snake, on fish and vegetables, but no meat." Lastly, he tells of a dinner at Rogers's, where he meets Madame de Staël, Mackintosh, Sheridan, Payne Knight, and Erskine.

Rogers, the banker-poet, to whom I have already made allusion, figured more conspicuously as an Amphitryon than as a diner-out, though in the latter capacity he was by no means undistinguished. For upwards of half a century he lived at Twenty-two, St. James's Place, where all that art and wealth could do to surround

its owner with the refinements of life had been done. "I never," says Proctor, "saw any house so tastefully fitted up and decorated. Everything was good of its kind, and in good order." "The furniture," says Macaulay, "has been selected with a delicacy of taste quite unique. The most remarkable object in the dining-room," he adds, "is a cast of Pope, taken after death by Roubilliac." Rogers's breakfasts were memorable events for those who partook of them—happy hours to be treasured up among the pleasures of memory. "His breakfast-table," says Proctor, "was perfect in all respects. There was not too much of anything; not even too much welcome, yet no lack of it." As warm an eulogy might well have been pronounced on his dinner-table, which was distinguished by a fastidious delicacy and fine taste previously almost unknown to our English cuisine. I think it may fairly be said that Rogers's example did much to purge our English dinners of their exceeding coarseness, and to popularise a more refined, a lighter, and a more wholesome method of cookery than had formerly prevailed.

As all the celebrities of the half-century met, at some time or another, round Rogers's splendid board, from Byron to Browning, from Sydney Smith to Washington Irving, from Sheridan to Lytton Bulwer, one can fancy what brilliant displays of wit and wisdom it must have witnessed! How delightful must have been the intellectual tourney, with the collision of quick imaginations, and the thrust, parry, and return of well-equipped minds! Flashes of epigram, critical judgements, close-reasoned arguments, happily told stories, the apt quotation—all these blended in the sparkling stream of conversation which flowed with such spontaneous fulness! Our modern ana and anecdote books are more than half filled with the good things gathered up at Rogers's table. As for instance: Rogers having had candles placed all round the dining-room, and high up, in order to show off the pictures, he asked Sydney Smith how he liked the plan.

"Not at all," he replied; "above there is a blaze of light, and below, nothing but darkness and gnashing of teeth."

Again: Rogers happened to ask Macaulay what he thought of Miss Harriet Martineau's wonderful cure by mesmerism.

"Oh, it's all my eye and Hetty Martin-eau!" was the smiling answer.

Sydney Smith—a frequent and always

a welcome visitor at Holland House—was an incorrigible diner-out, and his geniality, good-nature, sound sense, and ready humour, made him a delightful companion everywhere. A dinner-table was hardly complete without the author of "Peter Plymley's Letters"—the bold and amusing Edinburgh Reviewer, the practical, broad-minded clergyman, who was too rational a Christian not to enjoy in decent moderation the good things of this life, while sincerely believing in the good things of another. His accumulative humour, which, when it seized on a ludicrous subject, could not rest until it had piled upon it jest after jest, as its various aspects presented themselves, was never more fertile or spontaneous than at a friend's hospitable board. He was an enormous talker, and in this respect might fairly be pitted against Macaulay, to whom he once said :

"Now, Macaulay, when I am gone, you'll be sorry that you never heard me speak."

Bishop Blomfield—of London—had been invited to a dinner, but at the last moment sent a note of excuse, on the plea that he had been bitten by a dog, whereupon Sydney remarked—remembering, perhaps, Goldsmith's "Eegy on a Mad Dog"—after hearing the note read :

"I should very much like to hear the dog's account of the affair !"

It was at a dinner that, the conversation turning on a recent project to make bread from sawdust, he said, people would soon have sprigs coming out of them. Young ladies, in dressing for a ball, would say :

"Mamma, I'm beginning to sprout !"

It was at a dinner that, when some one mentioned the approaching marriage of a young Scotchman to an Irish widow, double his age and of formidable dimensions, he burst out :

"Going to marry her ! Impossible ! You mean a part of her. He could not marry her all himself. It would be a case, not of bigamy, but of trigamy. The neighbourhood or the magistrates should interfere. One man marry her ! It is monstrous. They might people a colony with her ; or give an assembly with her ; or, perhaps, take your morning's walk round her, always provided there were frequent resting-places, and you were in rude health. I once was rash enough to try walking round her before breakfast, but only got half-way, and gave it up exhausted. Or, you might read the Riot Act and disperse her ; in short, you might do anything but marry her."

"Most London dinners," he remarked, on one occasion, "evaporate in whispers to one's next-door neighbour. I make it a rule never to speak a word to mine, but fire across the table ; though I broke it once when I heard a lady, who sat next me, in a sweet voice say, 'No gravy, sir.' I had never seen her before, but I turned suddenly round and said : 'Madam, I have been looking for a person who disliked gravy all my life ; let us swear eternal friendship.'*" She looked astonished, but took the oath, and, what is better, kept it."

We shall not do amiss, I think, in turning over the pages of the "Diary, Reminiscences, and Correspondence of Henry Crabbe Robinson, Barrister-at-Law," who was as confirmed a diner-out as Tom Moore, but in a narrower and more serious circle. He will assist us, however, to look in at the dinner-tables of some notable personages, and extend our view of the hosts and guests of English society in the earlier decades of the present century. Robinson was the friend of Coleridge and Wordsworth : a man of refined tastes and many acquirements, with a sincere love of letters and a great reverence for great men.

When at Coruna, in 1808, he fell in with the noble family of Holland House, of whom the reader has already seen something.† I think his description, therefore, will not be without interest for us :

"Lady Holland, with her stately figure and grand demeanour ; my lord, with his countenance of bonhomie and intelligence ; a lad, said to be the second son of the Duke of Bedford, Lord [John] Russell ; and a gentleman whom I have heard called, satirically, Lady Holland's atheist, a Mr. Allen, but better known as an elegant scholar and Edinburgh Reviewer."

He records a remarkable dinner at Madame de Staël's, when the company included William Godwin, Cavan, Robert Adam, the diplomatist, and Lady Mackintosh. The hostess spoke freely of Napoleon, who, we know, also spoke freely of her. She had been introduced to him during his career of Italian victory ; and when he affected "princely airs," and spoke as if he conferred honour on those he addressed by merely speaking to them, she took pleasure in being rude. He said to her

* Sydney borrowed the phrase from Canning's burlesque of "The Rovers," in the "Anti-Jacobin."

† ALL THE YEAR ROUND. Third Series. Vol. vi., p. 209.

that he did not think women should write books. She suavely replied: "It is not every woman who can gain distinction by an alliance with a General Bonaparte." To Madame de Condorcet, the widow of the philosopher, who was a woman of ability, he said: "I do not like women who meddle with politics." "Ah, mon Général," she answered, "as long as you men take a fancy to cut off our heads now and then, we are interested in knowing why you did it."

On the occasion of the marriage of the Princess Charlotte to Prince Leopold, Robinson dined in the Hall with his brother barristers. Each mess of four was allowed an extra bottle of wine and a goose.

A dinner of the Poets. He dines one day at a Mr. Monkhouse's, the party consisting of Wordsworth, Coleridge, Lamb, Moore, and Rogers. "Five poets," says Robinson, "of very unequal worth and most disproportionate popularity, whom the public probably would arrange in a different order. During this afternoon, Coleridge alone displayed any of his peculiar talent. I have not for years seen him in such excellent health and with so fine a flow of spirits. His discourse was addressed chiefly to Wordsworth, on points of metaphysical criticism, Rogers occasionally interposing a remark. The only one of the poets who seemed not to enjoy himself, was Moore. He was very attentive to Coleridge, but seemed to rely on Lamb, next to whom he was placed. . . . Lamb was in a happy frame of mind; and I can still recall to my mind the look and tone with which he addressed Moore, when he could not articulate very distinctly: 'Mister Moore, will you drink a glass of wine with me?' suiting the action to the word, and hobnobbing. Then he went on: 'Mister Moore, till now I have always felt an antipathy for you; but now that I have seen you I shall like you ever after.' Some years after I mentioned this to Moore. He recollected the fact, but not Lamb's amusing manner. Moore's talent was of another sort. For many years he had been the most brilliant man of his company. In anecdote, small talk, and especially in singing, he was supreme; but he was no match for Coleridge in his vein. As little could he feel Lamb's humour."

It so happens that we have two other accounts of this poetic gathering, Lamb's and Moore's, and to compare them is curious enough. Moore writes:—"Dined

at Mr. Monkhouse's (a gentleman I had never seen before), on Wordsworth's invitation, who lives there whenever he comes to town. A singular party. Coleridge, Rogers, Wordsworth and his wife, Charles Lamb and his sister, the poor woman who went mad in a diligence on the way to Paris, and a Mr. Robinson, one of the *minora sidera* of this constellation of the lakes; the host himself, a *Mænas* of the school, contributing nothing but good dinners and silence. Charles Lamb, a clever fellow certainly, but full of villainous and abortive puns, which he mis-carries of every minute. Some excellent things, however, have come from him."

It is very plain that Moore was utterly incapable of appreciating Lamb's peculiar genius.

Now for Lamb's more genial and generous account in a letter to Bernard Barton:—"Saturday I dined in Parnassus with Wordsworth, Coleridge, Rogers, and Tom Moore, half the poetry of England constellated in Gloucester Place. It was a delightful evening! Coleridge was in his finest vein of talk—had all the talk; and let 'em talk as evilly as they do of the envy of poets, I am sure not one there but was content to be nothing but a listener. The Muses were dumb while Apollo lectured on his and their fine art. It is a life that poets are envious; I have known the best of them, and can speak to it, that they give each other their merits, and are the kindest writers as well as best authors. I am scribbling a muddy epistle with an aching head, for we did not quaff Hippocrene last night, marry! It was hippocrass, rather!"

As a contrast to the good dinners of which I have written so much, let us take Crabbe Robinson's feast with the monks of La Trappe:—"I was offered dinner," he says, "which I had previously resolved to accept, thinking I might, at least for one day, eat what was the ordinary food for life of men, who at one time had probably fared more sumptuously than I had ever done; but it was a trial, I own."

"I would leave nothing on my plate, and was prudent in not overloading it. The following was my fare, and that of two other guests, meanly dressed men. A little table was covered with a filthy cloth, but I had a clean napkin. First, a *soupe maigre*, very insipid; a dish of cabbage, boiled in what I should have thought butter, but that is a prohibited luxury; a dish of boiled rice seasoned with a little

salt, but by no means savoury; and barley or oatmeal boiled, made somewhat thick with milk, not disagreeable, considered as prison allowance."

A Dinner à la Russe: "At one of the most remarkable dinners I ever partook of. It was at Prince Gargarni's, the Russian Minister. But it was the eye, not the palate, that was peculiarly gratified. The apartments were splendid, and the dining-hall was illuminated by eighty-nine wax-lights. The peculiarity of the dinner lay in this, that there was nothing on the table on which the eye of the gourmand could rest. In the centre of the long table—the guests being twenty-six in number—were a succession of magnificent plateaux, beautiful figures of nymphs in chased gold, urns, vases of flowers, decanters in rich stands, with sweetmeats in little golden plates, etc., etc. A servant between each couple. At every instant was your servant whispering in your ear the name of some unknown dish. There was no harm in taking a dish at a venture, for the moment you paused your plate was whisked away, and another instantly offered. There was great variety, and everything was of first-rate excellence."

Half a century ago, "Dinners à la Russe" were virtually unknown in England. Of late years they have become the vogue—to the great injury of the Art of Conversation. For how can one talk to one's opposite neighbour through a colossal épergne or a miniature shrubbery? One is necessarily compelled to confine one's self to the guest on either side of one, and in this way, general conversation being rendered impossible, the hours are spent in unsatisfactory dialogues. Floral decorations within the limits of moderation and good taste are not only permissible, but desirable. Their colours and fragrance enhance the attractions of the feast; but to convert the table into a parterre, a flower-bed, or a posy, is an absurdity, and an offence against the fitness of things.

Robinson, on one occasion, dined at Lady Blessington's, where "the amusing man of the party" was Samuel Lover, song-maker, novelist, vocalist, and miniature-painter. He sang and accompanied himself, and told some Irish tales with admirable effect, one of King O'Toole and one of an Irish Piper, both of which have been published. Among the other guests were H. F. Chorley, for so many years the musical critic of "The Athenæum"—and of some distinction as a diner-out—and

N. P. Willis, the American poet and man of letters, who in his "Pencilings by the Way" and "People I Have Met," describes some interesting dinners. Comte d'Orsay "did the honours."

We may follow him also to chatty dinner-tables, at which he meets Talfourd, the author of "Ion," Charles Lamb, Coleridge, Rogers, Macready, and Frederick Maurice, to Dr. Arnold's at Fox How, and to Wordsworth's at Rydal Mount. Happy man, whose social circle included such "immortal lights," such bright and various spirits! The late Lord Lytton and "young Disraeli" (now best remembered as Earl of Beaconsfield) pass across his horizon. At a dinner given by Miss (now Baroness) Burdett-Coutts, he mixes with "two hundred and fifty of the 'haut ton.'" At Sir F. Goldsmid's it is his enviable fortune to foregather with Mendelssohn; at Kenyon's, with Robert Browning and his wife. And so the list runs on, while we wonder not only at the extent of his acquaintance, but at the intellectual wealth of English society.

One more Robinsonian dinner must suffice:

"I dined this day with Rogers, the Dean of the poets. We had an interesting party of eight. Nixon, the publisher, Kenny, the dramatic poet—who married Mrs. Holcroft, and became an old woman—himself decrepit without being very old; Spedding, Lushington, and Alfred Tennyson, three young men of eminent talent belonging to literary young England; the latter, Tennyson, being by far the most eminent of the young poets. His poems are full of genius; but he is fond of the enigmatical, and many of his most celebrated pieces are really poetic riddles (!) He is an admirer of Goethe, and I had a long tête-à-tête with him about the great poet. We waited for the eighth—a lady—who Rogers said was coming on purpose to see Tennyson, whose works she admired. He made a mystery of this fair devotee, and would give no name. It was not till dinner was half over that he was called out of the room, and returned with a lady under his arm. A lady neither splendidly dressed nor strikingly beautiful, as it seemed to me, was placed at the table. A whisper ran along the company, which I could not make out. She instantly joined in our conversation, with an ease and spirit that showed her quite used to society. She stepped a little too near my prejudices by a harsh sentence about Goethe, which I re-

sented. And we had exchanged a few sentences when she named herself, and I then recognised the much-eulogised and calumniated Honourable Mrs. Norton. . . When I knew who she was, I felt that I ought to have distinguished her beauty and grace by my own discernment, and not waited for a formal announcement."

OCTOBER'S END.

Oh, sweet October sunshine, soft and bright,
Coming thy month's last day to glorify;
Flooding the pale blue, cloud-flecked northern
sky
With lavish wealth of thy pathetic light!
While beech and chestnut all in splendour dight,
With gold, and brown, and tender russet dye,
Are decking out his grave right royally,
As slow and calm closes his last long night;
Walking along the wood-paths, where the leaves
Make a faint rustle round the falling feet,
While drooping from the red-roofed cottage eaves,
Pale vine and lingering rose make autumn sweet;
Old hopes, old loves, old fair dead memories,
Wake smiling 'neath October's dying skies.

AT SCHOOL IN FRANCE.

WHEN I became a pensionnaire at the well-known Parisian school, which I shall call Institution Notre Dame des Victoires, it was on the understanding that one of the twenty little cell-like bedrooms, allotted to such pupils as were willing to pay for them, should become for the time being mine. However, it happened that I had to wait for a vacancy, and that I was meanwhile consigned to a small dormitory, known as the Lazaret, far removed in the great pile of school buildings from the other vast dormitories. The first thing I was told was that I must get up at six, and must make my own bed—very neatly. I was about as capable of making a bed as the flies on the whitewashed ceiling above me, and could easily get up at six—without the sonorous warning of the school-bell—inasmuch as I had been awake since four wondering what on earth I should do. If I had been in one of the big dormitories, and had had to make my bed, and dress, and present my toilet properties in faultlessly neat condition for inspection, and see to the attire of the child whose "little mother" I had been constituted—all in a limited number of minutes, and in total silence—Heaven knows to what abyss of disgrace I should have sunk. But, as it was, one of the other inmates of the Lazaret was good-natured enough to help me. These Lazaret girls, all distinguished pupils, working hard—and how hard

French girls can work!—for a public examination, regarded me after the amusedly curious fashion in which honey-bees might look upon a harmless little worm, and were very kind, though quite outspoken as to their opinion of me, and—on Sundays—of my attire. On week-days we all, of course, wore the uniform of the school. I cannot, even now, think why, but nothing excited them to greater hilarity than my stockings—which they called crows—requesting to be informed if those were the sort of stockings people wore on the mountains. Very mournfully reproachful to my absent friends was I, in the long and dismal watches of the night, that they had sent me to school with stockings so amusing. By-and-by I was allowed to share a room with another—a little French Countess, a scion of a great historical family. Alas, alas! she snored terribly! I remember I used to sit up in despair and glare over—in the moonlight—from my bed to hers; then, at the first whisper of the advancing tempest, I am ashamed to say, I would make a violent grab at her recumbent figure, and shake her into semi-wakefulness. She did not seem to mind much, but it was not an agreeable way of passing the night, I should say, for either party. In the course of time I shared a room, looking out into the lovely garden, with a tall, fair English girl, who, although a delightful companion, like everybody else had her peculiarities. One of these was an intense love of order, and sometimes I longed for the conventual strictness of the adjacent dormitories. She had such an odd craze for getting up whilst it was yet dark to tidy the cupboard where I kept my belongings by candle-light. She would begin by awakening me to give me her assurance I should certainly not be disturbed, and then proceeded to pile all the articles of my apparel over me. It generally ended in some fearful mishap. I recollect starting up one dark morning just in time to see my gold watch fly meteor-like across the dimly illumined space, whilst Lavinia, candle in hand, crashed headforemost in its wake. Poor Lavinia! I heard somehow that she had married very young. I wonder where she is, and if she is happy.

There were some two hundred of us, and we were divided into classes, each class wearing a particular belt, and constituting in itself an entirely distinct school world. A girl was expected, in all minor matters, to obey her schoolfellows two classes ahead

of her, whilst it was considered a breach of etiquette to form friendships with those very much below. No disgrace was felt so keenly as falling to pass, at the proper season, into a superior class. If a girl failed two years running it was generally expected of her that she should go. Over us there reigned a great array of remarkably clever and well-educated governesses, who had, however, methods—especially of showing their displeasure—sufficiently startling to an English pupil. They called us to order, as it were, by the roar of cannon. Yet, perhaps directly after some scene of frenzy, one would come round corners upon those ladies tripping along with enchanting playfulness, or sweeping the corridors with the dignity of queens, so far as it seemed imagining they were such. Besides all these there were numerous gentle old dames holding minor posts—such as the mistress of the infirmary, the mistress of the private rooms. These old ladies used to dine alone in the refectory, and from one or other reason I was often an interested spectator of the scene. They were very stately, talking in their quavering voices of such topics as the weather in a haughty sort of way; and were altogether very grand, smoothing their faded neck handkerchiefs as if of costly lace.

"What, number sixty-five, is it, Anita?" Half-way through the dinner one of them would make a feint of discovering me. "Doubtless the child is about to have her music-lesson."

Then all the rest would murmur "C'est ça," and gaze upon me with benevolent superciliousness, pretending they were just as good as great governesses, any day; and so did I pretend, too, that they were, and that I was quite abashed by their goodness in noticing me. Dear old ladies! They were like the quaint, grass-grown nooks one came across through ancient doorways, in quiet corners of the school buildings; they were like the sweet, soft shadows of the giant horse-chestnuts at the bottom of the garden. Of course it was not betwixt us and them as it might in an English school. Here, from four to nineteen, we were all "the children," and anything like young ladyism was much discouraged. There was one rule I remember—a sad thorn in the flesh to some of us—that we should play vigorous games of exercise for half an hour after breakfast in the garden. It was left to two most amusing Scotch girls to find a method

of evading this. They were always very high in lesson and conduct marks—patterns of propriety—but more systematic rule-breakers I never met. Of course we went to the garden, as we did everything else, in orderly ranks, and they discovered that by placing themselves just behind one governess they could manage to bolt up a lofty staircase in a corner of the quadrangle before another hove into sight. We were so numerous that once in the garden or recreation-hall the chances of detection were slight. Then, of course, an equally skilful descent had to be executed. They continued to enliven the school with this entertaining spectacle for many a day. One of them was rather an untidy girl, and once, in her bird-like flight, caught the partially loose pocket of her apron upon the handle of the staircase door, and was obliged, perforce, to leave it hanging there. The governesses laid their black heads together—like so many ravens—over this pocket, and great were the consultations and disputations thereon, but nothing could be made of the enigma.

Another rule, forbidding us to enter each other's bedrooms, these two ignored in the grandest way. They held large receptions every night, the enjoyment of which was in no way interfered with by the fact that the guests were dispersed about such coigns of vantage as behind the window curtains, or under the bed. I remember being in the cupboard one night, talking away with animation to my hostess, who was in bed, when the door abruptly opened. It was old Madame Sylvain, the mistress of the rooms, and her amazement to find Janet, as she fancied, completely alone, was extreme.

"Good heavens, dear child, are you conversing with yourself?" she said blankly, after a pause.

"Madame," replied Janet, quite equal to the occasion, in a preternaturally solemn voice, "it is a part of my religion."

But I am afraid we "room girls" all transgressed very badly. "Madame, I come from studying my piano," was an announcement made very often in class, and after the profound courtesy without which no pupil ever passed a governess's desk. It was one which never failed to raise a furtive smile amongst the rest of the pupils, and I am afraid that, whether coming from sunny-haired Austrian, or soft-eyed Roumanian, or sparkling Russian, or dreamy Pole, or, indeed, from any of us belonging to whatsoever nationality of

all the many which we included, it was an announcement which had need to be translated—very liberally. There does exist this element of deceit in French schools, so often cited against them; that is one of the disadvantages of the system. But I think the moral evil is exaggerated. The sentiment was that all was fair in love and war, and further than that we did not trouble to think. There was no spirit of meanness abroad amongst us—no tale-bearing. And on the other hand there is much worthy of admiration.

It is impossible to speak too highly of the excellent course of education imparted at a good Parisian school, and one could not but admire, where pupils are drawn from such very varying grades of society, the way in which work and conduct alone formed the stepping-stones to esteem. The pupil is known by a number and a Christian name, probably not her own, and everything else connected with her family history is, for the time being, completely lost. Incidents were continually cropping up which illustrated this. I recollect once, in the lecture hall, being very curious as to a whispered conversation betwixt the presiding professor—the professor of modern history—and the directress of studies, which by-and-by ended with her turning to us and somewhat ungraciously calling out a couple of numbers. Thereupon two girls arose for whom I had always been particularly sorry—they had such a genius for getting into disgrace—and stood blushing and looking as though they were going to cry, whilst the professor made them a formal little speech. As I dare say they well knew, it excited us to greater merriment than awe to discover they were in their own country ladies of exalted title, the nieces of a reigning European sovereign.

I remember on another occasion the suburb in which our school was situated being thrown into wild excitement by the visit to one of our number of no less a personage than an Empress. I am afraid the little girl she came to see led a sad life of it just then, poor child, with all the unmerciful badgering she had to endure from her class-fellows. But such a state of matters—exceedingly salutary, I should fancy, for those more immediately concerned—one cannot quite conceive possible at an English school. Above all, the girls were loyal in their home affections, and to their very varying creeds. What a strange division there was every evening for

“family” prayers! The Protestants went to one room, the Roman Catholics to another, the Greek Catholics ranged themselves down a long corridor, and all the little Jewesses huddled into a study.

There was no rivalry in the school so intense as that betwixt the pupils of the two principal music professors. Ours was rather the more celebrated, a composer of world-wide celebrity; but then a sort of halo surrounded theirs. He was young, and they dared not talk to him! I think Frenchwomen have little sense of the ludicrous. Not one question could a pupil address to the poor man, but must turn and ask it of the governess seated alongside. I remember a terrific storm being raised by an independent young American remarking, as to this arrangement, that it was not “respectable.” When commanded, in full assize, to state what she meant by “respectable,” she drawled forth, “Wall—decent.” However, it was a pretty little Egyptian who in my time broke through the rule. With a stamp of her dainty foot and a furious “Hold your tongue, you bother me,” she crashed this venerable edifice of tradition to the ground. I never understood why we enjoyed such license with the dancing-master. I am sure he was as dangerous as anybody; it was such a cruel affliction to him that we were not sufficiently coquettish. It was a tradition amongst us that he had no toes; he had lost them, it was understood, through something terrible undergone by him, in his youth, at the opera-house. Perhaps he danced them off, perhaps a trap-door took them; but, certainly, his shoes were very short and square. He taught us, for the most part, the steps of ballets. “*Pas assez coquette*,” he would scream again and again through his fiddling, and, in despair, would turn his back on us, fiddling away the while, and dance himself—square shoes, stiff joints, shabby overcoat, grey locks and all—coquetting, as coquetting should be, with an imaginary columbine, and calling on us to imitate him. The French, entering quite into the spirit of the thing, did, and were gently imitated by the Americans; whilst the English giggled at each other over the shoulder, and the faces of the Scotch were a picture!

Of course we had many high-days and holidays, celebrated by fancy fairs, private theatricals, dances, and so forth; and no festivities throughout the entire year did we enjoy so much as those on Christmas Eve. The German governess always had a

grand Christmas-tree, with great games and snapdragon afterwards. It was customary, just this once in the year, for Protestants as well as Catholics to attend midnight mass in the chapel; and we would range ourselves in the dimly-lighted concert hall, and stand, silent and expectant, until twelve, tolling solemnly from the clock on the old tower, was the signal for irrepressible "Merry Christmas" greetings to break out amongst us English-speaking girls. Then, at the throwing open of the chapel doors, we struck up a hymn, and marched slowly forward, while Madame Crédon, the head of the school, wept surreptitiously on her velvet seat of honour, and M. l'Abbé smiled genially upon us from the altar. It was a pretty and an interesting scene, the long, long line of radiantly happy young maidens, representing nationalities so diverse—in their plain black frocks, belts of different colours, and high white caps; a sparkling silver cross pinned on the breast here and there marking a pupil of distinction. There was always a two a.m. supper in the refectory afterwards. If one can picture two hundred happy girls, all talking and laughing at once, just for this one night extravagantly obstreperous, one gets some idea of the tumult. The governesses took it all in good part, and were almost as hilarious themselves, and poor old Madame Crédon kept shouting "Bon soir—bon soir—Bon soir, mes enfants," because she wanted to be in touch with us, and could think of nothing to say. Once I remember she climbed deliberately on to a high footstool—she was very small and very stout—and there, after one gasp, wished us "A 'Appy Chreestmas." The sally was greeted with such a shout of laughter, followed by a vigorous cheer, raised by some ready-witted English girl—and caught up, in extraordinary variety, by the assembled multitude—that she fled precipitately, covering her ears; at which, so soon as we could speak, we agreed we did not wonder. Floreat Institution Notre Dame des Victoires.

THE ISLAND OF PENANCE.

PILGRIMAGES of a religious kind worked by excursion trains do not very highly commend themselves to the average intelligence of our day. There may be a measure of respectable piety in the hearts of certain of the pilgrims, if not in the

majority of them; but it is hard not to be more than a little suspicious of the master minds which institute and control the pilgrimages, especially when there is money at stake, and miracles are promised to those who attend fitly disposed to welcome and appreciate them.

The Island of Penance, in Lough Derg of County Donegal, suggests these remarks. It is the mean survival of as capital a piece of superstitious chicanery as ever robbed our poor foolish ancestors of their groats and rose nobles. The old legend is familiar to many people. Yet it is worth while to recapitulate it in few words. Of course, Saint Patrick is the soul and centre of it. The good saint was, we are told, so grieved at his inability to induce the Pagans of Donegal to believe in a future state that he prayed earnestly for special enlightenment, the better to be able to convert those incredulous heathens. His prayer was answered. He was guided supernaturally to an island in Lough Derg, and there shown a "privy entrie into hell." His experiences subsequently were just what one would suppose. He saw the damned in a very miserable plight. The same "privilege" was to be accorded also to others. Thus we may presume the Donegal heathen were converted much as a man is whipped into betterness.

Once established and accepted, in those dark ages the Purgatory was likely soon to be exploited by the monks who got hold of it. It became an exceedingly popular resort. Various accounts of it were written—notably that of the "Legend of the Knight," the author of which may from internal evidence have made himself familiar with Dante's "Inferno" before relating his own experiences in Lough Derg's island. A certain monk of Rhodes also astonished the world with his romantic narrative on the same subject. He visited the island in a state of anxiety about the soul of the King of Arragon, his late master. Nor could his anxiety have been much abated by his visit, if his story of the lamentable condition in which he found the dead monarch's soul may be credited in any degree. We read further, in the writing of one Staunton, of Dereham—whose record of a journey in 1409 is preserved in the British Museum—that he had a great revelation of "dragons, todes, and other 'orrible beests" while enclosed in the cave which was the very soul and core of the island. Round this cave were the huts of the monks who had charge of

the Purgatory, and who with their Prior seem to have made as hard a bargain as possible with the pilgrims, and especially those who had journeyed into Donegal from other lands. Indeed, it was this rapacity more than anything else which brought the original Lough Derg Purgatory to destruction. Not all the visitors were privileged to see the sights in the cave. This failure was particularly vexatious to men of fair intelligence who had put themselves to great inconvenience for the purpose. To be fleeced in pocket as well as disappointed of their reasonable expectations was too much. Thus complaints were made at Rome, and in 1497 the Purgatory was suppressed by a mandate of Alexander the Sixth.

This, however, did not hinder the Irish of the district from continuing their voluntary pilgrimages. So gradually the Purgatory re-established itself, a later Pope rescinded the order of his predecessor, and for about a century more the island did well. Then came the strife between England and Tyrconnell, and as a sequel sentence was passed upon the Purgatory, which was in 1632 utterly wrecked and dismantled. The unpleasant penitential resort known as Saint Patrick's bed—an area of sharp-pointed stones designed to pique bare feet—was broken-up; and, in short, nothing of the old place was left except the island. As for the Purgatorial Cave, which was the occasion of such spiritual ecstasy in some and such odd hallucinations in others, it proved upon disinterested inspection to be "a poor beggarly hole, made with stones laid together with men's hands, such as husbandmen make to keep hogs from the rain."

Thus ended the original Purgatory. The existing island of penance is not the old Purgatory. That is now overgrown with scrub and grass like the other islets which dot the south-eastern corner of the gloomy lake. It seems to be entirely neglected even by the more pensive of the pilgrims, for whom it ought to have many charms, poetical as well as spiritual. But perhaps one has no right to expect thought of any kind in these Lough Derg sinners, bound for a spell of mortification well adapted especially to keep all pleasant reflection aloof from them.

The old island still bears the name of Saints' Island. Its successor is known as Station Island. With the destruction of the original Purgatorial Cave, the degrading

influences of the place may be supposed to have been almost done away with. Merely as a sort of retreat from the cares of the world, enabling the pilgrim in quietness and peace to brace himself for another bout with sin, Station Island might have become as respectable as Saints' Island was the contrary. But it can hardly be said to have been that even fifty or a hundred years ago. Nowadays, though there is less filth and perhaps less of the brutal extortion which may be said to have sent its pilgrims forth penniless to beg their bread, there is still superstition enough of a deadening kind, and the penance is still severe enough to kill a weakling. As one reads Carleton's account of it when he visited it as "a true believer" at the susceptible age of nineteen, one marvels at its infamy. The penitents themselves were no sooner through their terrible ordeal of barefooted perambulations round and round the island on sharp stones, heated by the midsummer sun, and their frenzied night of prayer in the chapel—packed like the Calcutta Black Hole—during which they were kept awake by whacks on the head and the grim assurance by those in authority that they would become insane and lost at the same time if they slept; they had no sooner paid the priests in charge the due demanded and received their soul's release from sin in regular form, than they began to lie and cheat and steal with the most amazing brikkness. There was no attempt at discrimination between these wretched sham penitents and the conscientious ones whose tears and agitation bore witness for them. If the latter were unable to make up the sum required of them for their privilege of torment, they were rated by the priests like fishwives, and perhaps, worst of all, authoritatively informed that their sufferings were all in vain under the circumstances. It was a detestable, wretched business, and Carleton's own words afterwards, when he got home, half famished, flea-devoured, and robbed, seem not inordinately strong for a disillusioned Irishman at the most impressionable time of life: "Out of hell the place is matchless, and if there be a purgatory in the other world, it may very well be said there is a fair rehearsal of it in the county of Donegal in Ireland."

Years back it was an imperative part of the penitent's discipline to fast for some time before making the pilgrimage, and to reach the lake-side on foot.

It was not unusual then for the little town of Pettigo, some five miles distant, to be a sort of lazaret-house for the sick and the dying. The season of the pilgrimage fortunately is a short one—from June the first to August the fifteenth. One can imagine therefore that during its final week there used to be a fearful anxiety among the more impotent of the pilgrims lest their strength should give out ere the closing day.

But this is now changed. At most of the railway stations in the north and west of Ireland special return tickets are issued to Pettigo for the pilgrimage season. The very leaflet with the ritual observances printed on it for the instruction of the pilgrims, and inscribed with the impressive words: "Unless you shall do penance, you shall all likewise perish," Luke xiii. 3, gives information about these railway tickets on the other side. Nor are the penitents required even to walk the five uphill miles—rather dreary miles—from Pettigo into the moorland among the mountains of which Lough Derg's waters, with their stud of emerald islets, reflect the infrequent blue skies of Donegal. The trains are met by carmen, and all who alight at the station are greeted with the enquiry: "Are you for the island?" It may be assumed that most of them are. You can tell them by their trivial bundles, the rather strange light of anticipation in their eyes, and the slim phrase-books from which, during their railway journey—perhaps all the way from Dublin—they have been interrogating and answering themselves about their spiritual condition.

The majority of these railway travellers are women, of course, and many are of the servant-maid class. It does not need a keen eye to discern these industrious and faithful little maids, who can have little of consequence upon their souls. They have obtained a few days' holiday. Of these, perhaps, three are devoted to their parents in the wilds of the country, whom in all probability they half support with their small earnings; and the remaining three are consecrated to Lough Derg. One may wish all such pilgrims as these the best of success in their venture, and strength to get through the ordeal of their paters, aves, and credos—said to amount in all to two thousand five hundred and seventy-four—and particularly the night upon their knees "in prison." But whatever the degree of the pilgrims, they are entitled to ride the five miles to the Lough nowadays for a mere sixpence. The

pilgrim car starts soon after the arrival of the train, and a very curious study it is.

Pettigo itself is not at all a bad little village. For Ireland it is distinctly neat, and its houses have a clean, alluring look. This last, however, may be due to an annual special whitewashing early in June, ere the "season" begins. It is situated a mile or two distant from Lough Erne—a much more pleasant sheet of water than the remote and forbidding Lough Derg. That it is not wholly peopled by Catholics you may guess by the size of its Protestant church, and the orange-coloured banner which flutters somewhat pretentiously from its turret. In the evening, too, while idling through the twilight hour at the hotel window, watching the bare-legged girls going to and fro with milk-cans, the villagers gossiping at their doors, and the stately promenade of its two or three constables, suddenly you may hear the shrill notes of a drum and fife band which soon appears in the little market-place, and rather aggressively plays several tunes which full-fledged Nationalists do not care to hear. Still, there is not much likelihood of a conflict between the people of the two denominations. They agree to disagree amicably on the whole. This you will understand if you pass a second night in the village, and on the second evening are serenaded by the Catholic drum and fife band with its own fervently patriotic music.

From Pettigo the road to the Lough climbs due north immediately. It is an ascent all the way. The thoroughfare traverses a boggy, ill-cultivated district, and skirts a stream which, after rain—and it is more likely to be raining or to have just ceased raining than to be fine—may give fair sport to the two or three rustic anglers who divide their time between the water and the cattle they are supposed to be tending. A few tenements are passed. They are exceedingly strong examples of the conventional Irish cabin; built of thatch and stones, both of which have grown black with smoke and premature age, one or two chimneyed at most; with the dung-heap at the door, and the pig alternately wallowing in it and crossing the threshold with a jaunty air; and occupied humanly by a dilapidated-looking man and his wife and, say, half-a-dozen half-clad, hearty children, all of whom seem agreeably surprised to see a pedestrian. "You never mean to say as you've travelled it?" the master of the house

observes as he takes his short pipe from his mouth, and begins a conversation that may last till midnight ere his tongue would tire. It is evidently not the fashion for pilgrims in Anno Domini 1892 to go to their penance afoot. An irregular line of hills on both sides and in front—boggy, heathery hills of the common intractable kind—keep you company until you reach the watershed of the latter. Then from the ridge Lough Derg comes into sight, and the pilgrim's journey is temporarily ended. The eye ranges over the broad, dark sheet of water and the barren-looking hills which girdle it. On a fine day there is, of course, some brightness in the prospect; but with low clouds or rain the place seems desolation itself. Two or three little cottages may be discerned in all the miles of country visible, and no more. In the middle of this scene is Station Island, with its coterie of white buildings completely covering it. You may in the half gloom hear the dolorous bell of the chapel tolling across the water—as a further weight upon your spirits.

It is impossible to visit such a place in a cheerful mood. Indeed, you would be thought a queer creature if you did so. Neither the Prior in charge, nor his assistant priests—hard at work confessing the penitents after their laborious penances barefooted, their trying fast, and the still more exhausting night of constant prayer and wakefulness—nor the penitents themselves would feel well disposed towards the man who came into their midst with levity and mirth on his face. This is no place for sensual indulgence. The soul may run riot here; but in depression akin to madness, not in frivolity and joy. It is enough to look at the countenances of the pilgrims as they step methodically over the stones, telling their beads and muttering their prescribed paters and aves, to realise what bonds of discomfort religious superstition can put upon a man even in Anno Domini 1892. Some are kneeling at one heap of stones or "bed"; some are dragging themselves along like worms; others are going round and round these same heaps, or others, rather briskly and with a shrewder discrimination between the good stones and the bad ones; and, if you are near enough to them, you may hear yet others, with their backs to Saint Bridget's Cross and with outstretched arms, stoutly renounce the world, the flesh, and the devil thrice in succession.

They are mostly women, of the kind,

too, who do not feel much scruple in going barefoot all the day. Some are interesting-looking; young, delicate, and evidently earnest to a painful degree. You may guess that this is their first pilgrimage to the island. They don't know their way about like certain others: large-bodied, splay-footed dames, whose eyes roam here and there while their lips do their task, and whose minds, you fancy, are thinking in two or three directions at once. It is quite likely that the penitential sojourn costs the latter about half what it costs the former. As for the physical effect it produces, to the stout penitents it is a positively profitable mortification; but it may be death to certain of the girls. Visitors are not nowadays required to transport themselves experimentally into purgatory. Doubtless, however, to those of powerful imaginations, the midnight hours of kneeling, mingled with the groans of their neighbours and their own anxiety not to be remiss in one detail of the penance, there is yet a good deal of the purgatorial in Lough Derg's island of pilgrimage.

The Protestant visitor to the island must not expect to be greeted with more than cold civility. Of late the tendency to exclude him altogether from a glimpse of the place has increased. The present Prior has a particular distaste for publicity; he welcomes fully qualified penitents, and none besides. To his credit be it said that if he were offered a large sum of money by a tourist who he believed wished to see the island and its penitents merely for diversion, he would not allow the ferryman to land him. The Prior is an autocrat in Lough Derg. His will is law. The ferryman would as soon think of landing a non-Catholic on the island without special sanction as of throwing him into the lake.

But there is nothing here to induce the unsympathetic person to wish to stay for more than an hour or two. The penitents' regimen of bread and lake water, torture and mechanical prayers, might do him good, but he will hardly be persuaded to try it. He will find himself much more at home in the hotel at Pettigo, where, as he lies awake at night—there is a clock in the house with a fearful voice—he may well wonder that some ten or fifteen thousand persons can annually be found to make this pilgrimage. It need hardly be said that both Pettigo and the Church profit by the ten or eleven weeks of Lough Derg's season.

HAROLD CAMERON'S LOVE-STORY.

A COMPLETE STORY.

WHILE looking through some old papers of mine the other evening, I came across the following note, scribbled hastily on a half-sheet of paper. It was dated nearly fifteen years back; the ink was faded and turned brown. Why I had kept the thing at all I cannot imagine.

"DEAR COURTNEY" (the note ran),—"I guess I've won, old boy. Awfully sorry for you and the others, of course; but I'm in such good spirits I can't think of that. Blanche spoke to me to-night in such a way that there can be no mistake about it. She's a thousand times too good for a poor wretch like me, but I can try and be worthy of her. I will try, by Jove! I'm going to read up and improve my mind. Couldn't help sending you a line. I am a lucky dog. Eh?—Yours,

"HAROLD CAMERON."

It is strange how an old letter, even such a scrap as the above, will revive the past. As I looked at the boyish handwriting the face of Harold Cameron rose up before my mind's eye. I fancied I could hear his laughter and fresh young voice. He was only twenty at the time that letter was written. We were all—ahem!—much younger than we are now. Ugh! Confound the letter! Why had I turned it up in this way? . . . Burn all your letters, my friends, burn all your letters. Don't run the risk of recalling memories which, ten to one, are sad ones.

All the young fellows in our particular set were more or less in love with Blanche Whitworth. Some were particularly in love. I think I may, without fear of contradiction, assert that Cameron, George Coverley, and I myself, belonged to this latter class. Which of that old circle, I wonder, would care now to dispute the point? Has not Alf Turner, that roaring young blade, sobered down and gone into the Church, kept in subjection by a wife who rules the parish? Has not Grantley emigrated and made a fortune in sheep in Australia? Carstone, poor fellow, the jovial, the kindly, lies buried on an African battlefield. The rest of them—are they not respectable married men with families—men in the City; lawyers, stockbrokers, what not?

I remember quite well the night when we first saw Blanche Whitworth. It was at a dance at the Simpsons' when that

bright luminary appeared on our horizon. At this moment, looking calmly back upon events, I cannot for the life of me say what it was in the girl that made the attraction. She was pretty, I admit, but not at all surpassingly beautiful; her conversation was far from brilliant, indeed I never heard her say anything worth remembering; and yet there was always a little court round her, and all the men were dying to dance with her—ay, ready to die for a smile.

The other girls disliked her, as was natural. "Whatever people can see in Miss Whitworth I cannot imagine," was their usual remark.

Both Coverley and I danced with Miss Blanche on that first night—Cameron had not yet appeared upon the scene; after that we followed her about sedulously. Whenever we found she was to be anywhere within a radius of some miles, we always determined to be there too, or perish in the attempt. If we did not obtain invitations in the usual way, we bothered people for them in the most shameless manner.

It was quite a friendly rivalry between us, for George and I were far too good friends to quarrel. We used to talk to one another quite openly about our chances of success, and agreed that whichever the lady should choose was to bear his triumph humbly, and his friend his own hard lot with meekness. That one of us two must eventually secure the prize we do not seem to have doubted. I think I may assert without vanity that we were preferred above the crowd.

There is nothing like telling the truth, and I had better say at once that I am afraid the girl was a flirt; that is putting the case mildly. She had a charming way of making her partner for the time being believe that he was the one selected mortal from all the world with whom she alone liked to dance. That may sound trivial, put thus boldly; but it is true.

At that time I was a briefless barrister, and occupied chambers in Blank Court along with my friend Coverley, who had the rooms adjoining. Many a pipe did we smoke together in those brave days of old on our return from some of the festivities I have alluded to, while the chimes of the church clock outside struck far on into the morning.

It was not a great while after we had first known Miss Whitworth when young Harold Cameron came up to town, like

myself, with an ultimate view to the wool-sack. Mr. Cameron was to read for the Bar; and he was committed, in a sense, to my charge as one who could give him advice upon his studies. He was often in at our chambers, and both George and I grew to like the young fellow as we got to know him. We regarded him, I know, as immeasurably our junior both in years and experience. He was nearly of age—some five years younger than the present narrator; George, in his turn, being a year or two older than I was.

Our new visitor was a light-haired, blue-eyed youth, with the most infectious laugh in the world. His good humour was always quite irresistible to me; indeed, there were few people he met with whom the young fellow did not make friends. We speedily introduced him to our circle, where he became very popular.

I have wondered since that, when Cameron one day informed us that he had, in common with George and me, received an invitation to an evening at the Whitworths', no suspicion of what must inevitably follow crossed our minds.

We went. Cameron was led captive.

Mrs. Whitworth was a very nice old lady, but dreadfully deaf. Her deafness was the one topic upon which she ever talked. To every fresh acquaintance she imparted information on this head in a series of stereotyped remarks which never varied. [In the course of my experience I heard the conversation so frequently that I can distinctly remember it after all this lapse of time. To call it a conversation is, indeed, misleading. The old lady was far too deaf to hear any word that was spoken to her; the remarks were consequently all on her side, delivered with such a strident tone and distinctness of enunciation that they were always audible across a large room. The performance was known among irreverent youth as "Mrs. Whitworth's Recitation."

The reason I recall it at this moment is that it was on the first night of Cameron's introduction to Miss Blanche that I was suddenly reserved by her mother as audience. I was going up to speak to the younger lady, with whom I was now on such good terms as to feel pretty confident of my success. In passing Mrs. Whitworth I foolishly let fall some slight remark.

"I didn't hear you," said the lady, detaining me, and speaking with an aggravating slowness; "my deafness is

increasing. It is, you know, a purely nervous deafness."

I bowed assent.

"Our own doctor has told me: 'Mrs. Whitworth, yours is a purely nervous deafness.' I determined to have further advice; I went to Sir James Cope. You know Sir James Cope?"

I didn't; but I nodded in the affirmative. At this moment I saw Harold, who had been introduced earlier in the evening, leading Miss Blanche off for the waltz.

"I went to Sir James Cope; I saw all his instruments; he examined my ears; and what did he say? He said: 'Madam, never have your ears tampered with; yours is a purely nervous deafness.' When I was down in the country, Mr. Crimble, a most excellent and clever man, saw me and said: 'You must never have your ears tampered with; yours is a purely nervous deafness.' A remarkable consensus of opinion—which coincides entirely with my own views on the matter.—Oh, Mrs. Streatham! how is your poor husband? Quite worn out!"—and I was free to escape.

I mention the foregoing little conversation because, although it may appear absurdly unimportant and out of place in a narrative of this kind, it was while I was listening to Mrs. Whitworth's remarks, and seeing Harold walk by with Miss Blanche, that it suddenly flashed upon me that any reign of mine was over. When I saw the young fellow's radiant face, and the girl with her eyes looking straight into his with a peculiar thrilling air which was all her own, I seemed to have a kind of premonition of what Cameron would feel for her, and she, if she were human, for him. It was rather a tragic moment for me; I hope I listened to the mother without undue impatience.

I don't remember very much more that happened that evening.

When Cameron, George, and I were walking home together through the summer night, it was the first-named who talked all the way; the two elder men were singularly silent. And the talk was all on one subject, too; and I need not say what that was.

When we had said good-night to our young friend at the door of our chambers, and had gone up to our room and lighted the pipe of peace, George turned and said to me:

"Well, old fellow?"

"Well?" said I.

"Our ingenuous youth has done it, you see. We might have known he would fall head over ears in love with the girl; but you only think of these things afterwards. The serious thing for you and me, my boy," continued George, as though we had had a joint partnership interest in the affair, "is that Miss Blanche is, if I mistake not, also 'touchée au cœur'—the speaker smote his waistcoat with a dramatic air—"or else she's the most consummate flirt that ever lived. The two were having a high old time down in the supper-room. Methinks that a friend of mine—one Courtney—did not enjoy with his usual zest the pleasures of the *mszy* dance."

"Oh, confound it, George!" I said; "you know how I feel. I had an idea I was getting on well with the girl; and to-night she would scarcely look at me."

"I have long since," said George solemnly, "given up any hopes in the direction we know of, and I should advise you, my friend, from this moment to do the same. Our young friend will win in the race, you will see. Is the prize worth having, do you think? I shall take up the sensible position of the fox in the fable; my taste for grapes of any kind has quite departed."

"I hope," said I, with a groan—"I hope the girl is worthy of him, and won't play with him as—as—but never mind that. Let us hope Cameron will be more successful than—than some others of our acquaintance."

And we got our candles and went to bed.

Cameron was successful—to all outward appearance. From that first evening he followed Miss Whitworth with a pertinacity and a devotion which, as George said, entirely put any of our performances in the shade. He would come into our chambers I know not how often in the course of a week, and talk of the beloved one—or rather rave like the most impassioned lover who ever trod the stage.

I think that both of us seniors soon ceased to feel any jealousy because of the marked favour with which young Harold was received. We took to giving him good advice; we urged him to make sure of his ground before he gave his heart away—as though he had not already done that past recalling. George was particularly solemn in his warnings, but I don't think they had the slightest effect.

I remember, indeed, on one occasion, that when Coverley had mentioned the word "flirt" in connection with Miss Whitworth, Harold rose up in arms against him.

"Look here, you miserable old cynic!" he cried, half seriously, half in joke, "I won't listen to a word you've got to say against Blanche. You may call her a flirt if you like, but I know she isn't. She's been kinder to me than any one else in London. Do you think I don't know whether a girl's in earnest or not? And—and she's my friend, and—and I'll thank you not to speak of her again in that way in my presence."

He looked so wounded that George had to make his peace with him by a shambling sort of apology. In point of fact, we could not but admit, looking on as we did now quite as outsiders, that Miss Blanche was exercising a surprising constancy. By the time that she and Harold had known one another three months they were regarded as tacitly engaged, although no open announcement of the fact had been made.

I fear that during this period Cameron made but small progress with his legal studies, and I used gravely to point out to him some of the dangers of his present course; but he would only laugh at me for an old fogey, declare he had plenty of time—as was indeed the case—and begin to talk about much more interesting business.

It was about this time that a garden-party was given by a Mr. Hermann Seyfried, at which the present narrator was privileged to "assist," along with some of the other actors in this little drama. This Mr. Seyfried was a German of great wealth, who lived in a fine mansion and dispensed magnificent hospitality to his friends and acquaintances. The halo of his gold shone round about him, showing him to most people in a very favourable light.

Judged apart from the halo, there was, I fancy, nothing very much to admire; a snuffy, dark-looking little man, with enormous moustaches and a deep, guttural voice—not a "man of parts," judged by English eyes.

Howbeit, most people were very glad to receive his invitations, myself—let me be honest—among the number. He was a bachelor, and had a number of free-and-easy bachelor ways, which "took" with a great number of men; and then, too, it

must be owned that his dinners were remarkably good.

The garden-party in question was, I remember, a most brilliant affair. A great crowd of people was there. I fancy I can see at this moment the squat little figure of the host standing to welcome his guests, and that I hear his "How you do, Mees Vitvorth?—How you do, Meester Camerone?" spoken through the nose with great politeness. Mr. Seyfried was greatly charmed by the fair Blanche, to whom he was paying compliments, most of which were not understood, all day. I confess that, knowing the state of his finances, and knowing also—as I thought—somewhat of the nature of Miss Whitworth, when I saw his evident admiration, I felt a slight uneasiness as regarded Cameron's position.

That gentleman, however, did not betray, and, I believe, did not experience, any such feeling. He was paying his court more assiduously than ever. It did one good to look on his bright, youthful face. Whenever he was not actually by the side of his beloved one, his eyes followed her everywhere. Miss Blanche, I remember, was particularly gracious to some of her old friends—to George and me, and to others of her court—and I have to confess with shame and sorrow that—such is the weakness of man—we were all of us pleased to be so noticed, and showed no resentment whatever. The lady would smile upon and summon you one moment and cut you dead the next; and the victims of this caprice were so sunk in degrading slavery that they cheerfully bore with this treatment, and were always ready to come back to the careless beckoning of the haughty damsel.

What amused and a good deal gratified me was to notice the scant consideration shown by Miss Whitworth to Mr. Seyfried. She received his polite speeches with a demure gravity, and made open fun of him behind his back, mimicking his voice and gestures, his compliments, his taking of snuff, and who knows what other peculiarities the foreigner possessed. I believe even Harold was a trifle shocked, and remonstrated with the girl about her behaviour; but he was too ardent a lover to see any faults in her, and had besides his own affairs to discuss. This, I presume, was the subject in hand when I suddenly came upon the two in a peaceful corner in the conservatory, looking particularly confidential.

To show that they were confidential to some purpose, I must refer the indulgent reader back to the letter appearing at the opening of this story, which I received from Mr. Cameron on the day after the garden-party, and which document I consider to be alone responsible for sending me off upon these rambling recollections.

"That looks like a settled thing, at last," said I, as I tossed the paper over to George.

"That, as you say, looks like a settled thing," replied that sardonic individual oracularly, after a perusal; and not another word could I get out of him upon the subject.

We were expecting all that day to have Harold tearing in with his good news. He did not come; and we found that he had that morning been hastily summoned to the other end of England to his father, who lay dangerously ill—at the point of death, it was said. I had to leave town myself on the next day, for a fortnight as I supposed; but it was three or four weeks before I saw my own chambers again, and got a greeting from my dear old George.

After a while it struck me that he was a trifle constrained in manner, and at last I asked him, "Is anything the matter?"

"Ah," he said slowly, "you've not heard the news, then?"

"No," I said impatiently; "news about whom? What news?"

"Only about Blanche Whitworth and old Seyfried," very drily.

"What about them?"

"Engaged to be married; that's all."

"Never!" I cried incredulously.

George nodded.

"It's perfectly true," he said.

"But—Harold!" I exclaimed; "does he know? Good heavens! what will he say?"

"Ah, poor fellow. I don't suppose he does know yet; the news is only just out."

Then suddenly the phlegmatic George burst out in a fury:

"Confound it! It's too bad! What are these women made of? To make a fool of a fine young fellow like that. And he trusted her, poor wretch——"

"Where is he now?" I interrupted.

"I don't know. He's not been home yet—here, I mean—since his father's death. He's alone in the world now, you know. I've heard no word from him since he went away."

"Suppose we walk round to his lodg-

ings," said I, "and see if we can have news of him. If we can get him away with us, before he hears anything, so much the better."

We got up and went out, a vague sense of uneasiness troubling us.

A slight rain was falling as we came into the open air, very cool and pleasant after the hot day. I remember it was about five or six in the evening. Cameron's lodgings were but two or three streets off—only a few minutes' walk.

We could not make any one hear by ringing the bell, and as the front door was unlatched, we walked in.

"Hullo!" said George, as we stood a moment in the passage, "Harold's at home; here are his hat and gloves."

He went to the foot of the stairs, and called:

"Hi! Cameron, where are you, old boy?"

There was no answer.

At this moment the landlady came bustling in. Mr. Cameron had asked her to post a letter, she said. He was upstairs in his room now.

We wondered why he had not answered our call, and said we would go up. To our surprise, his door was locked; nor could we get any reply to our knocking. I think we both became thoroughly frightened now, for the first time.

"Let us get in," said I, "somehow or other."

George made no more ado, but simply put his shoulder against the door and burst it open. We came into the room with a bit of a rush. Then we saw a sight, and stopped dead.

Our friend was stretched upon the floor, his face drawn and ghastly—the face of a corpse. On the table was the wretched phial which told us only too well what had happened. It had held prussic acid; the room was full of the odour. We did what we could, but—poor Harold!—he was quite dead.

Heaven forgive him! We should never hear his friendly voice or cheerful laughter again.

We learned afterwards that, on hearing the news of her engagement, Cameron had written to Miss Whitworth asking if it was true. He received a curt reply—I saw the letter—saying that it was so, and Miss Whitworth must decline any correspondence with Mr. Cameron on the point. Mad with his disappointment, he had hurried to see the girl—had demanded an interview. It was denied him—Miss Blanche spared herself that unpleasantness. He was quite alone, and saw no way out of his trouble, poor fellow, save one.

Even now, knowing how he loved the girl, I wonder whether we, or any one, could have kept him from his dreadful fate, even had we had the chance.

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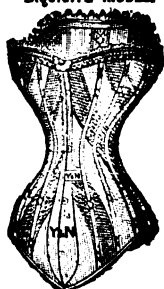
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MISS LATIMER OF BRYANS.

By ELEANOR C. PRICE.

Author of "Alexia," "Red Towers," "The Little One," etc.

CHAPTER XXVIII. A DISCOVERY.

THE arrival of Otto Nugent and his wife was more or less welcome to every one. His mother, much as she loved Arthur, placed all her confidence in Otto, and knew that there was no danger in trusting him with her faintest and most secret anxieties. Miss Fanny Latimer, who lost her patience with Arthur a little sometimes, of course without confessing it, was glad that his brother's coming should stop his persistent languid lounging by making it his duty to go out shooting with Otto. Poppy, with a new doubt of herself, a new and unexpressed fear that Arthur might find life dull in spite of all she could do, of all she could give, either in love or in worldly goods, hoped that Otto's cheerful common sense, his brightness and his practical ways, might be like fresh air to Arthur. She even felt that it would be possible if things grew worse to ask Otto's opinion as to what she could do; whether Arthur had any special fancy of which she was ignorant, and which she would so gladly gratify. This, of course, would be a last resource, but the very thought showed confidence in Otto's power of helping. It would always be easier to speak to him than to Mrs. Nugent. Poppy was on good terms with her future mother-in-law, but she neither loved nor respected her.

There was something in Alice, too, her music and her liveliness, which added very

much to the pleasantness of Bryans Court during the week that she and Otto spent there. Alice did not care what she said; her views were clear, if shallow; nothing high-flown or morbid appealed at all to her. She made them all laugh, either at themselves or at somebody else.

On the day after her arrival she went to church, where she recognised Geoffrey Thorne, and asked anxiously on the way home whether he had lately committed some crime. No one could look so dismal, she thought, who was not at least expecting penal servitude for life.

"That's exactly what he is expecting," said Arthur in a careless tone. "Penal servitude for life to Miss Farrant."

"Arthur!" murmured Poppy.

"Is she such a nasty girl?" asked Mrs. Otto Nugent.

"She is generally called the prettiest girl in the county," said her brother-in-law. "Didn't you see her, Alice?" and he went on to describe where Maggie sat in church.

"That gloomy-looking girl with black hair? She looked just as miserable. Poor artist! I'm sorry for him. Why did he do it?"

"She is too good for him," said Arthur. "Poppy does not think so; it is a point on which we differ."

"I rather think I should agree with Poppy," said Alice.

"Well, she has inspired him, at any rate," Arthur went on rather warmly. "You know what a stick he was with his drawing—Otto thought him awful. Well, he came home and did a charming picture of Miss Farrant. Poppy has it; you must see it. Better than any of his landscape things."

"It might easily be that," Otto

observed. "And he fell in love with his model!"

Arthur walked along with a queer, absent smile, hitting the ground with his stick.

"Was that it, Poppy?" asked Otto, glancing on to her.

"I don't know. I suppose so. It is very nice for both of them," she said. "Mr. Thorne is as good as he can be, and I am sure Maggie will be happy."

"Are they to be married soon?"

"It is not settled. I believe he thought so—but Maggie would prefer waiting. I told her," she said, colouring faintly as she looked up at Arthur, "that I thought it would be nicer to wait, too."

"I think you made a mistake there," he said quietly. "Better let them settle their own affairs their own way."

"Of course they will do as they like about it," Poppy replied; but in her manner there was a little of the great lady, who thought it the most natural thing that the affairs of her vassals should be settled in her own way, and not in theirs.

Arthur said nothing. Otto smiled to himself, and Alice began with her usual readiness to talk about something else.

Later in the day Poppy called Otto into her sitting-room, and showed him Geoffrey Thorne's two pictures which were hanging there. He would not admire the view of Herzheim.

"No, no," he said, shaking his head. "You are unprincipled; you are doing an injury to Art by letting that be on your walls."

"Art is nothing to me," Poppy answered with calmness. "I think the drawing is pretty, though perhaps a little too bright. And I love Herzheim—and the sketch was done on purpose for me, and given to me."

"Ah! that is fatal."

Poppy stood for a minute or two, looking at her painter's work with something like regret. Otto gravely watched her. Then suddenly lifting his eyes, he said:

"Is that the portrait Arthur was talking about?"

"Yes; you think that good, don't you?"

Otto examined it in silence. At last he said:

"It must have been what he said—an inspiration. It has faults, I see—and I am hardly artist enough to point them out, but the modelling here is not very good, and here, you see, the colour is laid

on a little heavily, those lines are weak, too. But on the whole, I am astonished at it. I had no idea that our friend had it in him."

Poppy stood smiling. From Otto she knew that this was real praise.

"And this is the girl he is going to marry? I saw her in church; yes. I saw her coming out, too. She is a very pretty girl. But, forgive me, Mr. Thorne must have strained a good many points to give her such an expression as that. He's an awful idealist, that fellow! Now tell me, did you ever see her look like that?"

"I don't know. What is it?" said Poppy rather stupidly.

"It is a refinement which is perfectly foreign to—unless you have given it to her. She is a protégée of yours, is she not? I have heard her name before."

"Oh, no, a friend. I am very fond of her. The grandfather is an old clergyman, and very well off," Poppy answered, a little roused by his seeming disparagement of Maggie.

Then she turned with a smile to the door, where Arthur was coming in.

"Still discussing those interesting people?" he said lazily. "Poppy, your aunt wants you. Come back to us, dear, quick."

"Don't you call that an awfully pretty thing?" he said, going up to Otto where he stood before Maggie's picture.

"Yes; it is pretty. But not a bit like, I should say. Too much expression."

"You could not tell anything from her face in church to-day," Arthur went on quietly. "She looked as bored as you please. But get her to yourself and make her talk—you will soon see expression enough. She is a beautiful girl and a clever girl, too. Not much educated; but nobody cares for that. The engagement to that man is a stupid business, and rather unaccountable, for he is a dry stick, though he knew how to paint her picture."

Arthur stopped short and stood gazing at Maggie's face till his brother, not being equally interested, turned round suddenly and caught an expression in his eyes which fairly startled him.

"Come," he said, "you are wasting a great deal of admiration."

Arthur turned from him, and walked off half crossly to the window. At first he was a little confused; then he laughed out loud and came back, stopping this time to stare at Miss Elizabeth Latimer over the chimney-piece.

"Is one expected to be blind?" he muttered. "Look, here is a different type. What do you say to this, as you are in a humour for criticising?"

"A different type indeed, and a far finer one."

"But not half such an attractive one," said Arthur.

Otto Nugent was too wise to say anything more, but he did not forget this little scene.

It might in some way have startled Arthur himself, for during the next few days he appeared to be in a much better humour.

A few men from the neighbourhood came to shoot with him and Otto. The sport was excellent, the weather was fine, though cold. The sportsmen and other neighbours came two or three times to dine, and on these occasions Poppy looked both happy and beautiful. Arthur could be charming when he chose, and during that week there was no fault to be found with him. Everybody was glad to make his acquaintance, and nearly everybody liked the handsome, delicate-looking young man.

The last day came. On the following morning the whole Nugent party were to leave Bryans, not to return till the middle of January. It was a mild and still December day. Poppy was rather melancholy and restless, Arthur particularly cheerful and affectionate. He was determined, it seemed, to make her feel a blank when he was gone.

In the afternoon she proposed to drive him and Alice round by Sutton Bryans, and Otto, who never drove if he could help it, promised to walk across the fields and join them at Mr. Thorne's farm. He and Alice both took a certain interest in Geoffrey, and were a little curious to see the old homestead from which he sprang.

Approaching the farm by the road from Bryans, Poppy drove under great overhanging old trees which the first Thorne might have planted, past large yards full of corn and haystacks, with glimpses of geese and turkeys just driven home into other yards, and innumerable other fowls. Peace and prosperity seemed to reign all about the old farm, though its owner was ready enough to grumble. Some young horses, a speculation of Frank's, were kicking up their heels in a field. Through the bare dark branches, against the dim December sky, white curling smoke crept lazily from several chimneys.

The door of the house up to which

Poppy drove opened on a gravel drive alongside the stable yard, but hidden from it by a corner of the wall. Here, as on the garden side, a paved way ran under the house wall. The east window of the large living-room, which had its own door to the garden in its south side, at right angles with this, looked out in a line with this door, distinguished as the real front door by two stone pillars supporting a kind of porch. It opened into a wide stone passage, running through the house between the large low rooms. The ordinary working kitchen was on the right of this passage, towards the yard; the beautiful old living-room on the left towards the garden. Further on was a large parlour, looking to the west and south, a delightful room, little used except on festive occasions, which were few.

"What a jolly old place!" exclaimed Alice Nugent, as they drove up to the low east front of the house.

Arthur got out and strolled to Bobby's head. As he did so, he was aware of two faces looking from the window just beyond. Even as his eyes fell on them they disappeared. A moment afterwards Lucy Thorne came tramping along the hall in her thick boots, with her hat on as usual, and a dog-whip in her hand. She looked a little excited, but not angry, and not quite so stony as usual.

She had seen the cart driving up, and had had time to say to her visitor:

"Here's Miss Latimer with a lot of people. Do you want to see them?"

Under the sharp question of her eyes, though not guessing how much it meant, Maggie answered her hastily.

"No. I would rather not."

"Then put on your hat and be off home. They'll want to see the horses, and cows, and things. I'll take them round before I bring them in. Be quick!"

"Geoffrey won't be in yet, will he?"

"Not before dark. The meet was seven miles off, and the run was sure to be on the other side of the country. Good-bye. You must come over again."

Then the cart drove up, and Captain Nugent came forward almost on a level with the window. Lucy pulled Maggie back into the room, astonished her with a rough kiss, and saying, "Get along, child, as fast as you can," went out to meet Poppy Latimer and her friends.

Her manner never was or could be very agreeable; but she had, in spite of herself, a kind of feudal feeling and an honest

admiration for Poppy, whose simple politeness could not irritate her. She took very little notice either of Arthur or his sister-in-law. She told Poppy that her father and brother were out hunting, and asked her bluntly if her friends would like to see the farm. She then whistled, and a small boy came running from the stable-yard.

"Mind that pony, Dick," she said; and she walked her visitors straight away in the direction from which he had come.

Alice looked up at Arthur and laughed, as their strong-minded hostess led the way with Poppy.

"A rough diamond," she whispered.

Arthur was staring on the ground in an odd and dreamy fashion. Thus reminded where he was, he looked up and laughed.

"Oh, yes, isn't she?"

Miss Thorne, though she could not have heard anything but the laugh, sent a sharp glance over her shoulder.

Alice did not care particularly for animals; but she behaved very well during the next quarter of an hour, and carefully following Poppy's lead, made remarks and expressed admirations which by no means disgraced her. Lucy's face softened into a grim smile; one way to her esteem was a real appreciation of her farming and housekeeping talents. As they left the stables and went on towards the dairy—her special pride—Alice said to Arthur:

"It is a pity that Otto is losing all this. Can he have missed his way?"

"By Jove, can he? I'll go and look," exclaimed Arthur, with the most cordial readiness and the pleasantest smile.

"Thanks so much, Arthur. Don't go far."

Alice proceeded calmly to explain to her companions, who had stopped and looked round, the meaning of his suddenly hurrying out of the yard. Poppy took it very quietly. Lucy Thorne looked quite oddly put out for a moment, but glanced at her watch and recovered herself, calling in a harsh voice to the dairy-woman to come and show her premises. Mrs. Otto Nugent reflected that this Miss Thorne was the queerest and crossiest woman she had ever seen in her life. Evidently Arthur's walking away had offended her.

"I hope that poor girl will never have to live with such a sister-in-law," she thought benevolently.

In the meanwhile Arthur had walked back to the house, completely forgetting Otto and his probable arrival; had ordered

the boy Dick to lead the pony away into the drive and keep him moving there; and had made his way round to the garden door, beyond the sight of young inquisitive eyes. He knew his way, for he had walked over one day with Poppy, two or three weeks before, when they came down through the orchard and the garden to this side door. Just as he reached the door Maggie came out of it. She had hardly been so quick as Lucy intended her to be. Perhaps curiosity, or an instinct of expectation, or some kind of resentment at having things thus arranged for her, or a general feeling of rebellion against fate and circumstances, had made her linger on the dangerous ground.

Anyhow, here he was. He had seen her through the window; she knew that, for with regard to him, her eyes were even quicker than Lucy's. And it was a triumph, though a strange kind of one, that he should have left all his belongings and run the risk of coming back to speak to her. She smiled as she stood in the doorway. Not much harm could happen now, she thought; and it was an irresistible joy that Arthur should be standing there, looking at her once more kindly. Lately he had either avoided looking at all, or his eyes had been too angry.

Now they said so much that after a minute she could bear them no longer, and turned away. Arthur stepped after her, over the threshold, into the half-light of the old room.

"You must not come in here," she said quickly.

"Why are you so unkind to me?" he said, standing still.

The next moment or two of silence did neither of them any good. In her presence Arthur began to realise that this was more than play—more than flirtation; that he loved this girl in real earnest. And what was to be done? The alternative of behaving like a man, of letting her alone, of respecting the double barrier which stood between them, did not at all suit his spoilt child nature. Maggie herself, in spite of her smile, kept a resolute distance now; and thus, really without intending it, only made him more impatient.

"I saw you through the window," he said slowly. "I was rather surprised."

"Why?"

"Oh, of course it's all right and natural—only so unlike you."

Maggie stood looking down, playing a tune with her fingers on a polished oak table.

"It is a much nicer house than ours," she murmured in her softest tones.

"I ought to congratulate you, I suppose," he said after another pause. "Ought I?"

"As you please."

"Then I won't. In fact, I don't know what there is for me to say, while you stand like that and won't look at me. Well, shall I be very good? Miss Farrant, I hope you will be happy."

"Thank you," Maggie said, but her lips trembled.

"I want you to tell me something," said Arthur.

He came suddenly close to her. His hand was on the table, then on hers, and then her other hand was a prisoner, too. She turned her head away, the slow colour rising and burning in her cheeks.

"I'm not asking for anything," he said. "I'm not going to worry you. We have both made an awful mess of it, and I suppose things will have to be left as they are. As to this stupid engagement of yours, my poor little girl—you shouldn't have done it. Get out of it if you can. While there's life there's hope, don't you know!"

"What do you mean?" murmured Maggie.

"Mean? Oh, nothing," he went on in the same hurried whisper. "It's only that I love you—you know that, don't you? Tell me you know that."

Maggie would not turn her head or speak.

"This is what I want to know. If we had met when we were both free, you wouldn't have liked anybody else better than me, would you? Tell me, Maggie. I'm going away to-morrow. I shall not see you again for weeks. Not till you are married, perhaps."

"That will not be for a long time—not till you are," Maggie said suddenly.

"That is her arrangement, is it?"

Maggie bent her head.

"A double wedding! Oh, by Jove! But you have not answered my question, Maggie."

This interview, as well as their former one, came to a sudden and alarming end. They were standing just inside the open door, half turned away from it, Maggie's eyes on the floor, Arthur's on her, while he held her two hands and stooped forward with a most lover-like air. The firelight gleamed on them both. This was the picture that Otto Nugent saw, as he

came down the soft path from the orchard with his cat-like step. He was within three yards of the door before either of them heard him. Then Maggie started suddenly, looked up, and met his astonished gaze. Arthur, following her eyes, turned white and set his teeth with a furious exclamation. For a moment he tried to hold her, with the idea of defying Otto and the whole world; but she slipped her hands from his and fled out of the door like a hunted animal, flashing past the intruder as if she did not see him, running at full speed up the path, disappearing into the orchard, even before Otto had reached the door, where his brother stood in the same place waiting for him.

Otto was in reality horrified, but he came in laughing.

"So that is your little game!" he said. "My dear fellow, if you don't take care, you will find yourself in an awful mess."

AT CRÉCY.

HISTORIC battlefields are generally alike in one respect. They force the visitor to recur to his imagination, and little but his imagination, for a vision, faint and defective, of the scenes which were once enacted upon them. There may be nothing—absolutely nothing—in the landscape to help him to realise that upon this spot mailed men and booted knights met in deadly fray. In that case, unless he have strong fancy, he will see nothing but the cornfields and waving tree-tops; the red-roofed cottages and blue-gowned peasant women, who are the modern presentment of the place. And one battlefield will have no individuality compared with another battlefield—or, at least, the individuality will be derived rather from the vicissitudes of daily life at the various inns in the neighbourhood than from the contrast of the natures of the different battles themselves.

These thoughts come inevitably at Crécy, as one approaches it afoot either from Abbeville in the south or Hesdin in the north. It is the very place for a battle, and yet of the battle itself on August twenty-sixth, 1346, what trace remains? Until the other day, indeed, there was the famous mill on the little hillock which commands the shallow valley in which French and English fought. Tourists revered the mill exceedingly. It was the one proof, after the old stone cross which marks

where the King of Bohemia fell dead, that they had really and truly discovered the battlefield. Hither they brought word to Edward the Third that the Black Prince was hard pressed. From his post, in all probability, the King knew as much perfectly well; for the mill stood over the strife like the rim of a saucer towards the saucer's depression. It was hence he sent back the proud refusal of aid to his valiant boy. "Tell him that I reserve the honour of the day for him." He was, in fact, to do or die in stern earnest.

While this mill stood, Crécy was able to interest visitors from across the water who came to be shown by Frenchmen where England triumphed over France. The mill was everything; but only a few months ago the hill of the mill passed into new hands, and the proprietor straightway demolished it. One would suppose, naturally, that this deed would be tacitly approved, if not abetted, in the village. But it was not so. Loud are the lamentations of the landlord of the "Golden Cannon Hotel," and of the two or three more who have been wont to reap a harvest, limited but regular, from the curiosity of visitors. Now it is said to be different. At Boulogne and elsewhere enquiries are made antecedent to visiting. "What is there to be seen?" the tourists ask. Boulogne answers: "Nothing; the mill is gone—nothing therefore remains, monsieur." Which does not, of course, persuade monsieur that it is at all worth his while to go to the trouble of reaching this very out-of-the-way little village, spite of all its triumphant memories.

The new proprietor of the mill hill has not left one stone standing upon another. The hollow of its excavated foundations is there. For the rest, it is a miniature crater, from the lip of which you look over the smooth slopes of beetroot and grain which constitute the battlefield. Crécy is a great place for beetroot; and there is even a factory connected with the crushing thereof on the skirts of the village. Near it is something else which in six months' time will bring Crécy even more into touch with the modern conditions of life. This is a brand new railway station. The line is not yet made, but it is, of course, surveyed, and the sod is upturned north and south of the station as well as in the neighbourhood of Abbeville and Hesdin, which it proposes thus to put into direct communication with each other. The railway, it is confidently hoped, will atone

in a measure for the destruction of the mill.

For my part, I should have been glad on this September day if the railway had already been completed. I reached Abbeville somewhat late in the afternoon, and did not altogether relish the walk of twenty kilometres which was before me. That was because it had rained tempestuously all the morning, and was still raining when I left the train at Abbeville, and sat drinking black coffee in the refreshment-room of the station, and pondering whether or no I should put off Crécy until the morrow. But I decided not to procrastinate, and, fully resigned to a wet skin, I trod into the Abbeville streets, and aroused expletives of astonishment from the citizens whom I asked in succession to direct me towards the Hesdin high-road. Two or three of them seemed to think me crazy. I was forcibly informed that Hesdin was about thirty-six kilometres distant, and that it was already three o'clock. However, I love to mystify people, and so I merely smiled while thanking them for their information, and went my way through the streets of the old town.

An old town it must be, since it was hence that on the morning of the day of battle Philip of France and his hundred thousand men marched gaily to the north in quest of the English. Indeed, its houses bear witness to its age, and notably its white perpendicular church with the usual gallery of headless and otherwise disfigured saints and heroes on its façade to tell of the fury of the Revolution and much else. But it is altogether an attractive little place: cleanly, and with gay, provincial shops, the plums and pears in which were argument of the wealth of fruit in the suburbs. It lies low compared to its surroundings. One gentleman of whom I entreated a direction almost frightened me by the energy with which he impressed upon me that I was to continue to mount a certain hill. "Il faut monter toujours—toujours, monsieur!" he declaimed with gesticulations. It seemed to me he could not have shown more emphasis had he been sending me up Mount Everest.

But the Abbeville hill soon comes to an end, and discloses a spacious plateau to the horizon, which dispels all further anxiety about the task before one's legs. Happily, too, when I had attained its summit, the sun had beaten the clouds, and the high wind and widening rifts of blue overhead were fair indications that I

should reach Cr  cy—if I reached it at all—sufficiently dry. It was just the kind of walk to enjoy, and just the day. Of strong beauty there is not much in this part of France; but there is something relishing and cheerful about broad, hedgeless expanses, with occasional dark shading of woods over the area, and long lines of limber, roadside poplars bending before the racy wind. One experiences here the same invigorating sense of breadth, dignity, and distance that the American prairies inspire. It is the fashion to praise our hedgerows inordinately; but no one can deny that they sadly abbreviate the horizon. Also, they interfere with the appreciation of a battlefield, even as they would extremely impede a cavalry charge, or arrest the advance in line of the best disciplined infantry. If Waterloo had been scored with hedges, there is no knowing if France would not still be in the hands of the Napoleonic succession. They offer cover for skirmishing, and the adjacent ditches are convenient hiding-places for the man who thinks he has had enough of the battle, and fancies he has a little wound somewhere. But this said, it seems that all possible in favour of them has been said from a military point of view.

I had not walked four kilometres from Abbeville when a courteous stranger in a gig overtook me, and offered me a lift. He proved to be a most patriotic retired captain of gendarmes, with a humorous turn of mind.

"Suppose now, monsieur," he said, "I were to request to see your passport, and it were not to satisfy me, or you could not produce it, why should I not drive you at once to the district police commissioner?"

"The answer," I replied, "is simple. You would not do so ungallant and absurd an action, because it would be unworthy of a proper Frenchman."

"Pas de compliments, monsieur," insisted my curious friend who had me so much at his mercy. "I see it in your eyes and expression that you are not a common tourist—that you have, in fact, a purpose in thus coming to France."

"To be sure," I protested, "since it is not my habit to travel anywhere without a purpose."

"Excellent, monsieur. Then I assure you I am taking you to my friend the Commissioner, who may then feel it imperative to detain you."

The mirth in him, if it was there, was so well feigned that for a moment or two

I was almost convinced against instinct that I had fallen into the hands of a fool. My laughter seemed to irritate him; so that once he appeared quite ill-mannered for a captain of gendarmes.

But the cheat burst at last, and we passed to other topics; the worth of his horse, for instance, which pulled at the reins as if it had the strength of a locomotive. And anon, when we were at the village which was his destination, and when I had drunk with him and responded to his toasts, he did his utmost to persuade me to give up the idea of walking on to Cr  cy, and to return to Abbeville with him instead.

"It is ungenerous, monsieur," he continued, peeping over the edge of his glass at me. "There were other battles in which you English did not come off well; but we do not bear them in mind. Why should you come and hold your head high in our country just because five hundred years ago your archers could shoot straight?"

This was a pointed interrogation, and somewhat a delicate one to answer. Vain was it to prate about the sentiment of the thing. The stubborn fact remained that I was about to enjoy France's humiliation for a minute or two. Could he, a Frenchman, feel aught else but displeased with me?

He proved, however, that he could. With a shrug of resignation, he took my hand and wished me good speed.

"Toujours un Fran  ais," he shouted after me, tapping his waistcoat to imply that his heart was rooted and grounded in fair France.

I walked till I came to a cross-road, with a low white "anberge" at the junction. The byway to the left led to Cr  cy across more fields of grain, cut and being cut, with here and there an iron crucifix by the roadside, the Christ with a supplicatory fresh ear or two of wheat set about its head. The wind still blew strong so that the slim poplars, with crests like the tails of a French poodle, bowed low before it. The sunset was at hand, with stormy portents in the west. And these signs seemed to stimulate the workers among the grain. They were present in surprising numbers considering that in ten miles I had seen but two small villages, and for the greater part of the way had not had a house in sight. A stolid-looking, broad-hipped race these north French folk seem. Both women and

men were in the fields, and working on an equality of exertion if not of pay.

At the second kilometre stone from the junction Cr  cy came in sight in its wooded little valley. I had before then gone through the hamlet of Marcheville, a snug little place in a copse, with a church having a slated spire. But of adults Marcheville appeared bereft, and the two or three bare-legged children upon whom I chanced in the miry lanes fled to their domestic dunghills in front of the house with startled screams.

Cr  cy's glen runs from south-east to north-west, and it was upon the northern slopes of the valley that Edward the Third marshalled his little army in waiting for the French. These latter had to dive into the valley to get up at him, and of course when the battle began our stout archers did not give their foemen half a chance of reaching the goal they strove at. Besides, it was just then such sticky weather as I myself found in the neighbourhood. After a twenty-kilometre tramp, the Frenchmen might well slip about in wrath and despair upon this chalky soil.

The village boasts nowadays of one thousand eight hundred inhabitants, and as much enlightenment as may be expected of so remote a place. It has a club, and the club gives balls now and then. It has also several inns, one, the "Corne de Cerf," of a mellow red brick, bearing date 1613. Had I seen it ere I came to the "Golden Cannon," I should have been ensnared by its antiquity; but there was no doubting the "Golden Cannon's" superiority. At this hostelry there was a sort of table d'h  te, the meeting-place of two or three of the town's attorneys, and as many others who amused me by their cavils at the fare provided by mine host's wife and the maid. It was certainly not rich food, and the steaks almost deserved the term of "cheval" which one attorney applied to them in an undertone. For drink we had cider, and it was so sour that it could not fail to be wholesome. In my ignorance of the customs of the "Golden Cannon" table d'h  te, and thirsting greatly, early in the meal, and when nothing else drinkable seemed coming, I grasped the private bottle of red wine of our president—I believe the mayor himself. This almost stupefied the others, and their undisguised admiration of my audacity opened my eyes to the larceny. The mayor, however, nobly condoned the deed, and pressed the red wine upon me

again when I made a wry face at the cider. Afterwards the guests separated with as little enthusiasm as they had shown when the soup appeared. I suppose none but a hero or a martyr by disposition can endure a bad dinner without resentment.

Ere the meal was served, I had gone out to the battlefield in the gloaming with my landlord's son for a guide. The boy was a student of medicine at Amiens, now at home for the vacation. After Amiens, Cr  cy was, he confessed, bad for the temper, even as the Cr  cy cider is bad for the teeth. He was charmed to be my guide "pour passer le temps." And so we walked two kilometres out to the "eight trees" by the roadside, near which is the misshapen relic of the original cross raised where the blind King of Bohemia was laid low. The cross is a very venerable-looking object, with modern bracings of iron. Even a sceptical person must admit that it may well date from the fourteenth century. The King died here and was buried about fifty yards away, where the wheat stood dark in the twilight. Subsequently, his body was disinterred and conveyed to an abbey in the neighbourhood, whence it was later transported to Bohemia.

Where the cross stands, lichened and chipped, but still substantial in its decay, we are in the very hollow of the valley, and in the middle of the space covered by the French army. The British bowmen shot from the upper ground into the mass of the enemy, disorganised by the falling back of the Genoese mercenaries, who were in the van of Philip's forces. My guide was just of an age to feel a very natural distaste to show to a foreigner where his own countrymen came to grief. Yet he made no effort in admitting that we Britons deserved our victory. "They were tired," he said of the French, "and it rained. You can see it would be difficult for them. There was no protection for them either, and your archers had a good aim."

One might have supposed he was talking of an event which he remembered as a boy. But doubtless in Cr  cy the tale has been passed down through the centuries, and the history manuals have kept it fairly fresh. You see this boy, like the retired captain of gendarmes, laid emphasis on our skill as marksmen. It is a skill worth perpetuating as a national heirloom. But for it we should not have come through the Peninsular War in Spain as well as we did. We have this on the testimony of the French General Marbot, whose memoirs

of the Napoleonic epoch ought to be instructive reading for England as well as France. "In my opinion," he said, "the principal cause of our reverses, although it has been mentioned by none of the military writers upon this war, was the immense superiority of precision in the fire of the English infantry, which came from their constant musketry practice, and also very much from their formation in line of two ranks." Perhaps a little of the credit for this precision ought to have been given to our national coolness of temperament, a quality that has often served us well on the battlefield. But for the sake of the profit we may get from General Marbot's judgement, it may be wise to attribute it to the causes he has discovered. Bisley Heath is an institution as valuable for us as the great manoeuvres upon which our friends across the Channel pin their faith.

It seems uncertain whether or not artillery was used at Crécy; but if it was used, Edward's gain of time in being able comfortably to establish himself on the ridge and to fix his cannons, having first dug trenches upon his flanks as a further protective measure, was worth to him another thirty thousand men. The French must have been half mad to attack as they did in such a case, even though conscious of their superiority in numbers. Wary, and floundering up the slippery slope, they were at the mercy of the cannon-balls as well as the archers' shafts. But, in all probability, we may dismiss the idea of artillery from Crécy. Surely the tradition would have been verified, if not by all the historians, by the harvest of cannon-shot which a later time would have reaped from the ploughed soil. Though even here it might be demurred that in those days ammunition was so precious that spent balls would be regathered on the field of battle with as much solicitude as if they had been prisoners of price.

The French captain of gendarmes had reproached me with going to Crécy to exult over a misfortune that France had suffered. Really there was little enough exultation in the matter. An event of five and a half centuries ago has receded almost beyond the limit at which it touches either pride or sympathy. A man must have the faculty of patriotism extremely well developed in him to feel the thrill of triumph after so long a lapse of time. It is permissible to think perhaps that he would be the gainer in such a case if he could feel towards France even as he feels

towards England. We do not seem to be made with sympathies of absolute rigidity or of indefinite elasticity.

By the time we were again at the "Golden Cannon" it was dark, and the dinner was ready. Afterwards the innkeeper played *écarté* with one of the attorneys, while the innkeeper's wife looked on, and the maid plucked a couple of fowls. These various incidents all took place in the one large common room, which also possessed a famous chimney-corner, to which I withdrew with my cigar and coffee when I tired of watching the gamblers.

There was a gleam of speckless brass ware about the room, and a black cat blinked at the flames which now and then broke from the logs on the hearth. It was early September, and therefore by no means cold. But an evening mist had come over the country which made the glow welcome. Moreover, it was here that the "cheval" and the soup had been cooked.

I rose early the next morning, and hailed the sunlight elatedly. The auguries had been very bad the night before, and my landlord had confirmed his student son's prognostications about a wet tomorrow. Instead of this, the blue of the heavens was unbroken, and there was a crispness in the air which told of a spurt of frost ere the dawn.

Crécy, like any other red-roofed little country town, looked gay and sparkling under the morning light. A milkman cried through the streets at half-past six, and from my window I beheld the various tradesmen and their families come to their doors and gaze and peer up at the sky contentedly. There was further a very noisy gathering of poultry about the cobbles of the broad, lozenge-shaped market-place, near which the "Golden Cannon" stands, with its toy sign pointing at the house over the way. The "Golden Cannon" black cat could be seen stealing discreetly through this throng of excited fowls, its ears set back as if it were fully prepared for the worst should a sudden murderous impulse seize the Crécy bantams.

I took my breakfast an hour before the rest, and was gone ere the landlord had left his bed. Five portly basins of bread and milk were preparing. This is the "Golden Cannon's" preliminary déjeuner. One can hardly fancy an attorney beginning the day's business with bread and

milk; but I fear the landlord and landlady of the "Golden Cannon" are not people to make allowance for prejudices or unconventional bankings at meal-time. The maid was still plucking at the poultry while I consumed this homely fare. They must have been as old as the battle itself if, as it seemed, they had kept her pulling at them from ten o'clock until six. But perhaps they were a new couple.

Ere leaving the town, I strolled through its streets and out on the western side. The heavy bunches of black grapes on the façade of two or three of the houses appeared ripe enough to eat—though not after bread and milk. The brown faces and the cleanly dress of blue cotton with white head gear made the gentler sex of the town seem uncommonly attractive. I noticed this still more in the dilapidated old church at the corner of the market-place, wherein I found them upon their knees, with "*cœurs de charité*" set among them. The church may well date from before the battle, at least as a foundation. It has a curious conglomerate of a tower, and though at first sight of strong, white stone, one discovers that the stone is a mere epidermis over walls of an antique kind of red brick. An unusual offer of indulgences in placards upon the church door seemed to argue either that the town was in need of special absolution, or was for some unapparent reason temporarily licensed with special favour. Of monuments I discovered none, save externally at the east end, where was an enclosed space marking the spot where "the body of that venerable and discreet person—the late curé of the parish," lay under the Crécy sods. His epitaph further said that "he lived to do good to others." Even a Positivist would admit that he could have had no nobler inscription over his bones.

In the centre of the market-place is an old cross, contemporary with the nucleus of the church. It is of the same old red brick, with stone capitals; though the pedestal is much worn by the friction of blue smocks and their owners.

Of literature, Crécy possesses none. Not without hope, I approached a shop with sundry books and bottles of ink in its windows. It would be odd indeed, methought, if in all these generations some native bard, apologetic or otherwise for his country's mishap, had not been born, and put his notions into rhyme, with perhaps certain strong local touches

valuable to this later age. But I was too sanguine. Within, the shop was consecrated to wall-papers and little else. The master of it disclaimed any connection with the battlefield. He had not so much as a photograph of the "eight trees" which stand by themselves among the beetroots and grain where the fight was hottest, or of the King of Bohemia's well-frayed cross. But he admitted that, with enterprise, money might be made by a pamphlet or a camera. Not once nor twice only had he been asked for such mementoes—"always by the English, monsieur, you understand"—and, really, if he had a little spare cash—

Perhaps when the railway is constructed the spare cash may be forthcoming.

From the wall-paper shop I turned my face towards Hesdin, twenty kilometres to the north. The sky still held serene, though to be sure it was but a quarter past seven. The air was sweet and mild now, and with a touch that told of the sea but a few leagues to the north-west.

When I had passed the hill of the mill, and scoffed in my heart at the miller—though to some his aggressive patriotism may seem an estimable quality—I took to the fields, with the blood-red poppies bright among the fervid greenery of the beets. There were at least three larks in the air above as I descended the ridge, which concealed the little red-roofed town when I was less than a quarter of a mile from it. One does not expect larks to sing in September, but the choir was not the less welcome for its untimeliness. Besides, it was an augury of good. And in fact there was no rain all the day, and noon found me at the table d'hôte of the "Hôtel de France" at Hesdin, in the presence of a new group of Frenchmen.

AFTERNOON TEA.

FIVE o'clock tea is generally regarded as an institution of comparatively recent growth. Mrs. Fanny Kemble, in her interesting "Records," tells us that when she was staying at Belvoir Castle in March, 1842, she received private invitations on several afternoons to the room of a certain Duchess who, with a circle of specially favoured friends, was engaged in the brewing and drinking of tea. "I do not believe," says Mrs. Kemble, "that now universally honoured and observed institution of 'five o'clock' tea dates further back

in the annals of English civilisation than this very private and, I think, rather shame-faced practice of it." There is evidence on record, from sundry sources, to prove that between 1840 and 1850, various attempts were made to introduce the practice of afternoon tea-drinking; but although in isolated cases the cheerful cup won its way, it was not until a good many years later that the custom became generally established.

But although the practice was a novelty when the noble Duchess and her friends, greatly daring, raised their private altar at Belvoir to the feminine deity, it was really a revival of an old habit. In 1758 there was published a little book with the following title: "The Good and Bad Effects of Tea Considered, with some Considerations on Afternoon Tea-Drinking, and the many Subsequent Evils attending it"; and there are many allusions in memoirs and other works of the past which show that three or four o'clock, if not five o'clock, tea-drinking was familiar to our forbears. The habit was bitterly attacked, as may be gathered from the title just given. The opponents of tea, a hundred and forty years or so ago, were as fanatical in their denunciation of the mild beverage of far Cathay, as those who now espouse the cause of the Chinese shrub often are in their attacks upon all those other beverages which are pleasingly labelled "intoxicating liquors."

Jonas Hanway, who is better known as the man who first carried an opened umbrella in the streets of London, attacked the whole practice of tea-drinking. He denounced it as a dangerous custom, pernicious to health, obstructing industry, and impoverishing the nation. Dr. Johnson reviewed Hanway's "Essay," and, as might have been expected from a man who was accustomed to keep Mrs. Thrale up until the small hours were well advanced, making endless cups of tea for him, brought his heavy artillery to bear upon the author of such a heresy. Goldsmith also "slated" it in a lighter strain, and pointed out the superiority of tea as a drink for women over the spirituous decoctions formerly in favour with the sex. A greater than Hanway, John Wesley, delivered himself of a philippic against the popular beverage. He declared that the habit of tea-drinking was wastefully expensive—tea was then about twenty shillings a pound—that it impaired digestion, unstrung the nerves, and induced symptoms of paralysis. It was a terrible

indictment, but its effect was like that of the great lord cardinal's curse, for no one seemed one penny the worse, and tea-drinking continued to flourish. It was only a few years after Wesley and Hanway, and other enemies of tea, had done their best to arrest its growing use, that Cowper, in his delightful picture of the pleasures of a winter evening, immortalised the joys of the "cups that cheer but not inebriate."

Oliver Wendell Holmes has recently defined afternoon tea as "giggle, gabble, gobble, and git." As for the "gabble," it is a comparatively charitable version of the scandal which is always associated with the steam of the teapot. Why do "tea and scandal" appear to go so naturally together? The association is of long standing. In Restoration days, when tea was sold at from twenty to fifty shillings a pound, it was as popular with the ladies as at any subsequent period, and the talk appropriate to tea-drinking was of the true scandalous quality. In Congreve's "Way of the World," Mirabell speaks of "genuine and authorised tea-table talk—such as mending of fashions, spoiling reputations, railing at absent friends, and so forth." And in an earlier comedy, "The Double-Dealer," by the same dramatist, when some one asks where the ladies are, he is told that "they are at the end of the gallery, retired to their tea and scandal, according to their ancient custom, after dinner."

It is evident that scandal was ungallantly associated with tea because the latter was at first, and for many a long year thereafter, peculiarly a woman's drink. The men of the last century were accustomed, like Squire Western, to sneer at tea and coffee as "slops," while members of the male sex who, like Cowper, avowed their liking for the mild delights of the teapot were put down as milksops. No one, however, ventured to describe Dr. Johnson as a milksop, although his devotion to tea was unbounded. "I suppose," says Boswell, "no person ever enjoyed with more relish the influence of that fragrant leaf than Johnson. The quantities which he drank of it at all hours were so great that his nerves must have been uncommonly strong not to have been extremely relaxed by such an intemperate use of it. He assured me that he never felt the least inconvenience from it; which is a proof that the fault of his constitution was rather a too great tension of fibres than the contrary." "Tension of fibres" is an odd

phrase, but there is no doubt that Johnson's tea-drinking powers were exceptional.

De Quincey was almost as fond of the fragrant infusion as the lexicographer himself. In the pleasant picture which the essayist gives us of the interior of his northern cottage, on a winter's evening, when the mountain winds are roaring fiercely outside—the small room populous with books, and warmed by the blaze of a cheerful fire, the flickering light of which is reflected from "furniture plain and modest, befitting the unpretending cottage of a scholar"—in this sanctum the tea-table stands by the fire, and on it is an "eternal teapot," for, says De Quincey, "I usually drink tea from eight o'clock at night to four in the morning." This is quite worthy of Dr. Johnson; but tea consumed in such a fashion was almost as unwholesome as the other beverage—the ruby-coloured drug in the large decanter—which disputed with the teapot the command of the opium-eater's table. De Quincey took high ground in his defence of the cups that cheer. "Tea," he says, "though ridiculed by those who are naturally coarse in their nervous sensibilities, or are become so from wine-drinking, and are not susceptible of influence from so refined a stimulant, will always be the favourite beverage of the intellectual."

In these later days tea is as popular with most men as with women, and the old sneer at tea-table talk has rather lost its point. Perhaps we may take refuge behind the Quinceyan axiom, and claim that we have all become intellectual. Or is it that we have all become artistic, and are unable to resist the appeals which pretty porcelain, dainty napery, and other graceful accompaniments of five o'clock tea make to our æsthetic sense? Or again, is the real reason of the increased popularity of tea among men to be found in the process at which De Quincey hints—in the decay of the habit of hard drinking, and in the consequent increased sensibility of the palate to the delicate fragrance of the Indian and Chinese leaf?

On one point, at least, we may congratulate ourselves, and that is, on the improvement in tea-table manners. Some old-fashioned folk used to signalise the conclusion of their tea-drinking by turning the cup upside down in the saucer. In other circles, the recognised sign of a disinclination for more tea was the placing of the spoon in the cup instead of in the

saucer. When the Queen's first Prime Minister, Lord Melbourne, was a lad, residing at Glasgow in the house of one of the University professors—about the end of the last century—he wrote to his mother an account of the Glasgow table manners.

"We drink healths at dinner," he writes, "hand round the cake at tea, and put our spoons into our cups when we desire to have no more, exactly in the same manner that we used to behave at Hatfield, at Eton, and at Cambridge."

ALMANACKS.

WHEN stormy winds are blowing and dead leaves are whirling about, the cry of "Almanack" from some street-seller seems to give force to the impression that it is practically all over with the current year, and that we must look out for its successor.

Imagination bridges over the dreary times we may expect of fog, and frost, and mud, and shows us an opening spring, which, for once, will not disappoint expectations. We begin to think of next year's holidays, and are curious about when Easter will fall, and when Whitsuntide; and when the new almanack appears in its bright cover it becomes, for the moment, an interesting object, as being, as it were, the programme of the coming year's entertainment. Perhaps our interest would be the greater if the almanacks were not so universally diffused, and were more difficult to acquire. But with most people towards the end of the year it begins to rain almanacks. To say nothing of those dropped into the letter-box or left fluttering about in the area or front garden, which are concerned with wonder-working pills and ointments, there are almanacks pouring in, and gratis too, from every side. Tradesmen bestow them on their customers; insurance companies rejoice their policy-holders with fine ones in gold and colours. Charming little calendars appear in boxes of mixed biscuits, and your local journal bestows upon its subscribers a sheet almanack altogether too vast either to be hung up or shelved. It is incumbent, too, for every man to support the almanack of his own particular trade or profession. Solicitors, bankers, grocers, gardeners, stockbrokers, all these and a hundred other interests are appealed to by some special form of almanack.

With this universal diffusion, naturally, the almanack has lost some of its ancient dignity. There was a time when the calendar was something of a religious mystery, the knowledge of which was confined to a priestly or patrician caste. A good deal was thought of the bold enterprise of C. Flavius, who, about 300 B.C., wormed out the secret lore of the heathen pontiffs of the period, and published the whole calendar, with full particulars of all the lucky and unlucky days of the year, on the walls of the Forum of Rome. And the curious arbitrary divisions of the Roman Calendar, which few, especially schoolboys, can carry in their heads for long together, were perhaps cunningly devised for keeping the matter out of unprofessional hands.

Yet the calendar of old Rome has come down to us practically intact, and one of its slight anomalies—the occurrence, that is, of two long months in succession, July and August—is a curious reminder of a morsel of ancient history. When the sixth month of the year, reckoning from March, was dedicated out of respect to Augustus, it was felt that his month ought to be at least as long as that of his uncle Julius, or July—and so February, already short of a day, was robbed of another. The deed was a good one, for nobody cares how short February may be, or would grudge August even two or three days more.

More durable calendars in stone and marble have come down to us from among the monuments and relics of ancient Rome, and such a famous poet as Ovid thought fit to illustrate the calendar by recounting the legends and traditions that attached to it. The subject is one not likely to attract a modern poet. Yet there have been attempts at a rhymed calendar. And, indeed, there are experts who will teach you a certain strange doggerel about a man who lived at Dover, which if properly applied supplies a perpetual calendar that will give the day of the month for the asking. But the only rhyme of the sort that has fairly established itself in popular favour is the somewhat trite one beginning, "Thirty days hath September," which has existed in one form or another for a good many centuries, but of which the original author is unknown.

As for the calendar itself, we may fairly infer that it reached Europe by way of Egypt, where the priestly caste possessed considerable astronomical knowledge; and

doubtless the Chaldeans had also a hand in it. When Rome went down under the pressure of barbarian warriors, the Church kept up the calendar and adapted it to its own purposes, and the ecclesiastical calendar is an instrument of considerable ingenuity in its devices for keeping in touch with the movement of the spheres, with its Epact and Dominical Letters, and tables for the determination of Easter. When once the early British Church had been brought into conformity on this latter important point, the Roman Calendar, with its fasts and feasts, became current through the length and breadth of the British Isles. Many fine examples of calendars illuminated on vellum are to be found in collections of ancient manuscripts. A more primitive calendar, but one more easily understood of the people, was the clogg, a square block of wood, with the days of the months scored on the angles, a quarter of a year on each angle. The Sundays are indicated by a longer notch, and each saint's day has its symbol carved with a knife on the flat surface of the wood. Many examples of these cloggs were in existence and even in use a century ago. These seem to be derived from the ancient Roman calendar of stone, with the record of three months of the year carved on each of its four sides.

But the almanack properly so called, owes its existence to another set of ideas. In its origin it is not merely a device for keeping people in mind of the progress of the year. It is an attempt to show what destiny has in store for us as indicated by the position of the stars in any particular year. And as, according to astrological lore, the destinies of men are ruled by the different aspects of the planets, so also the human body is subject to the influence of the constellations through which the sun appears to pass in his yearly course. A French almanack of 1610 gives a diagram of the human body surrounded by all the signs of the zodiac, and indicates the various organs and members over which these signs have power; and this for a guide "pour les saignées," or to show at what periods blood may be let with safety. But the same almanack also gives directions sensible enough for the avoidance of the plague, which would not be found fault with by a modern fashionable physician

Who would keep his body in health
And resist the infection of the plague,
Let him seek joy, and sadness fly,
Avoid places where infections abound,
And cherish joyous company.

A few examples exist of almanacks of this character, before the invention of printing, although none, it is believed, earlier than the twelfth century. But some of the earliest specimens of printing are block-printed German sheet almanacks which are chiefly concerned about blood-letting. The earliest English printed almanack is the calendar of Sheparden, of the fifteenth century. But many almanacks must have come into existence when Queen Elizabeth gave the monopoly of publishing them to two members of the Stationers' Company. King James afterwards extended the patent to include the Company in its corporate capacity and the two Universities, which last assigned their rights for a yearly consideration to the Company.

But with the Civil War the monopoly was broken through. Oxford, where the King chiefly resided, might issue its loyal almanacks; but the more popular and widely circulated was the almanack of William Lilley, the astrologer, first issued for 1643, under the title, "Merlini Anglici Ephemeris." The English Merlin is to be credited with the foresight of getting upon the winning side, and prophesying boldly for the Parliament was presently justified by the overwhelming victories of his party. In the issue of the Ephemeris for 1647, the prophet, writing in October, 1646, launched out into a bold paean of victory: "A new world since this time twelve months! Townes and cities taken or surrendered, armies Royall routed, the Parliament forces, ubicunque, victorious, His Majesty distressed, the Prince fled beyond sea." He does not hesitate to show how the approaching conjunction of Mars and Jupiter presages still further calamity for the Royal head. But his triumph does not make the prophet magnanimous. He has no words too scornful for a rival seer who has endeavoured to find encouragement in the stars for the losing side, "that miserable A B C fellow Naworth, of Oxford." But "Naworth," who is really Captain George Wharton, writing under an anagram of his name, and who styles himself student in astronomy, replies in a pamphlet with much spirit, and shows that Lilley's fine astrological tables, his houses of the planets, and tables of their essential dignities, are copied without acknowledgement from Eicstadius his Ephemeris. The gallant Captain owns sadly enough that the worst things have befallen his party, but

will not allow that the stars fought against them.

The fault, dear Brutus, is not in the stars,
But in ourselves, that we are underlings.

But Lilley had practically the best of the argument. He goes on prophesying, and is made much of by the "honourable worthies" of the Parliament, who send him to the camp at Colchester to encourage the soldiers by his predictions. For a time he is a prophet in much honour, and gains great largesse, including a gold chain from the King of Sweden for honourable mention in his almanack. Alas, there are no such rewards for almanack makers in these days!

But with the Restoration Merlin has to sing small, and sue out his pardon with the rest, and the period brings to light a rival almanack, "Poor Robin's," of a light and laughter-loving character, which makes fun of the astrological lore and weather predictions of its more serious contemporaries. Under January, 1664, we read: "There will be much frost and cold weather in Greenland." For February the forecast is: "We may expect some showers of rain either this month, or the next, or the next after that, or else we shall have a very drye spring." For July: "If we should have much snow this month it will be great hindrance to haymaking." And under a dissertation "of the critical or unfortunate days of the year" we read: "If on the 5th of May thou play a match either at football or wrestling, and there break a leg or arm, then that is an unfortunate day." Eclipses, too, are burlesqued, and the pompous diction of the astrologers is parodied. "Poor Robin's Almanack" suited the temper of the times, and brought in good profits to the Stationers' Company, who published it, and who had now regained their monopoly.

In spite of the persiflage of "Poor Robin," people still believed in weather prophets, the most successful of whom was Francis Moore, under whose name the Stationers' Company began, in 1680, to publish "Vox Stellarum," a prophetic almanack, which continues in existence to the present day, and which as "Old Moore's Almanack" still enjoys a good reputation. Each year from the above early date, "Old Moore" has also shown a wonderful astronomical hieroglyphic plate, in which crowns, sceptres, skulls, swords, torches, and various emblematic figures are freely introduced. If you are clever enough to read the hieroglyph, you

are in a position to start as seer on your own account; but the venerable author is generally able to show that events have vindicated his ambiguous oracles.

But "Old Moore" was hardly looked upon by his contemporaries as an orthodox astrologer. It was left for Partridge to continue the high school of prophecy after Lilley's death. Partridge had been concerned in the publishing of the "English Merlin," and there is a Partridge's Almanack to this day. He enjoys the distinction of an allusion by Pope, who sings in the concluding stanzas of the "Rape of the Lock," where he describes the lock of Belinda's hair as glorified into a constellation:

This Partridge soon shall view in cloudless skies,
When next he looks through Galileo's eyes;
And hence th' egregious wizard shall foredoom
The fate of Louis, and the fall of Rome.

The Stationers' Company long continued to monopolise the trade in almanacks, rigorously prosecuting those who infringed their patent. It was towards the end of the eighteenth century that one Thomas Carnan, a bookseller, for three successive years published an almanack, and was thrice imprisoned. Then it occurred to him to question the rights of the Company, and in 1775 the Court of Common Pleas decided in his favour. But although the monopoly was broken through, the Company still had the virtual control of the trade in their hands, and continued to issue the good old astrological, mythological almanacks, with "Poor Robin" as an antidote, whose jokes, though no coarser than of old, appeared so, perhaps, to a more refined age.

But in 1829, the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge began to issue the British Almanack, which, with its "Companion," formed an almost terribly serious block of useful information. There were no pleasant astrological conceits here to be found, no little jokes, and anecdotes, and pleasant stories, such as often marked the frivolous almanacks of the period; and the statistics and economics were only relieved by sketches of new public buildings; and depressing enough and even saddening were the public buildings, the local town-halls, the commercial rooms, of the Thirties and Forties, as a glance at any of the old "Companions" will show.

All this time, up to 1834, it must be remembered, there was a stamp duty on almanacks of one shilling and threepence a copy, and it was not till this duty was repealed that almanacks began to spread

into popular everyday use. Till that date the most serious concurrents of the established almanacks were the "pocket-books," once considered as an almost indispensable item of personal belongings. Local pocket-books often attained a surprising amount of success. The East Anglian stood by the Ipswich pocket-book, the West-countryman would swear by that of Bath. At the beginning of the year these pocket-books well bound, and often smart in red morocco, with gilt edges, formed quite a show in the shop of the country stationer. People sent in their names betimes for these publications, and looked forward to their appearance with much interest. There was the calendar, of course, and some astronomical notes, copies of verses, a sentimental story, maxims and proverbs, all neatly bound, with flap and pockets. Excellent engravers concentrated their talents into little gems, an inch in diameter, to form headings to their popular pages. They are all gone now, probably gone to the limbo of extinct annuals, of Keepsakes, and of Books of Beauty.

In the great increase of almanacks which followed the abolition of the duty, comic almanacks had their place. But even these gave a certain amount of solid information, and their fun was of very mild and harmless character. Even Cruikshank failed to invest the calendar with much humorous verve, and there is after all something ghastly in a joke which has to be kept on hand all the year round, as is the function of an almanack. But Cruikshank's almanack is one of the few of which the back numbers are valuable. In a general way an old almanack is only saleable by weight, and it rarely makes its appearance even in the rummage boxes of the bookstalls. Yet, scarce as old almanacks must ultimately become, nobody seems to have yet arisen with a mania for collecting them. It is sufficient, perhaps, that the British Museum Library possesses a great collection of them, the titles of which fill a portly volume of the catalogue under the heading of Ephemerides.

But the solidest of all the almanacks and the one of most importance, from a scientific point of view, is the Nautical Almanack, which was originally started by the Astronomer Royal, Dr. Maskelyne, in 1767, and is now compiled under the direction of the Admiralty by the best astronomical authorities. This almanack is published three or four years in advance,

so that navigators on distant voyages need never be without its assistance. Thus, incidentally, it becomes the basis of most of the almanacks of the day, which are indebted to it for the more scientific part of their contents. But it is, as yet, impossible to publish a meteorological almanack which shall give a scientific forecast of the weather—and secure the confidence of the world in general by always turning out to be right in the main. Such a system one P. Murphy thought he had discovered, and published an almanack for 1837 based upon his discovery. This turned out very well; the almanack was often wonderfully right, and upon one especial day occurred a violent and unexpected storm which had actually been predicted by the almanack-maker for that very day. In consequence there was a demand for the next issue of the almanack that was unprecedented in Paternoster Row. The Row itself was blockaded by eager applicants, and Pactolus seemed to be within the reach of the famous Mr. Murphy. But alas! the new volume failed most dismally in its purpose. Never was weather more perverse, running constantly counter to all poor Murphy's carefully calculated predictions. The man himself owned that he had been utterly wrong, but his system was all right. He had left out one particular factor in his calculations, but next time, if people would only try him again, they would see how right he would be. There was no rush for the next year's issue, but still a fair demand; but the system turned out no better than before, and after another set of explanations and another trial, Murphy's almanack closed its career.

PARISIAN CAFÉS THIRTY YEARS AGO.

IN 1862, the late M. Alfred Delvan published an interesting volume entitled "*Histoire Anecdotique des Cafés et Cabarets de Paris*," the original cost of which was three and a half francs; this little work, long since become a bibliographical rarity, is now generally quoted in booksellers' catalogues at the advanced price of from thirty to forty francs. In a smartly written preface, the author alludes to the subject chosen by him as follows: "Those who know Paris need not be told that what in England is called 'home life' is with us an impossibility; such a mode of existence would appear to us intolerable.

What we require is publicity, whether on the boulevard or in a cabaret matters little; we are a nation of 'poseurs,' and are only at our ease when in the midst of a crowd, 'poseurs' like ourselves. And where can we satisfy this gregarious propensity more agreeably than in a café, that 'democratic drawing-room,' as it has been aptly termed, where, surrounded by congenial spirits, we may play the part of talker or listener, as the fancy prompts us?"

A few extracts from this curious little book, supplemented by my own personal recollections, may perhaps not be uninteresting, especially as certain of the establishments described have now ceased to exist, their very names indeed being almost entirely forgotten. One, however, the last vestige of which disappeared previous to the publication of Delvan's volume, deserves a word of mention, namely, the Café de Paris on the Boulevard des Italiens, founded in 1822, and finally closed in 1857. This, in its day the most fashionable resort of the kind, combined the specialities of café and restaurant, and counted among its habitual frequenters, members of the Jockey Club, diplomats, and other social notabilities, including the witty Count de Montrond; Véron, the manager of the Opera; Alexandre Dumas, and Roger de Beauvoir. The charges were high, the average cost of an ordinary dinner varying from fifteen to twenty-five francs, a tariff effectually preventing impecunious "flâneurs" from patronising the locality. One of these, I remember hearing, occasionally adopted the following ingenious mode of penetrating gratuitously into the sanctum. Strolling unconcernedly in, he enquired of the "dame du comptoir" if a certain nobleman, whose absence from Paris he had previously ascertained, had ordered a table to be reserved that day for him; and, on receiving an answer in the negative, leisurely withdrew. Then, taking up his position, tooth-pick in hand, on the steps leading to the Boulevard, with the air of a man who had dined well, he succeeded in attracting the attention of a stray passer-by or two, and his vanity gratified, pocketed his tooth-pick, and quietly proceeded to appease his hunger at the two-franc ordinary of the Grand Colbert, or the still cheaper "*Bœuf à la mode*," congratulating himself that if he had not actually dined at the Café de Paris, he had at least enjoyed the credit of having done so.

At the northern extremity of the Pa'ais

Royal, projecting far into the garden, stands the Café de la Rotonde, originally known as the Café du Caveau, one of the oldest and—of late years—most elegant establishments of the kind in Paris. The interior is handsomely decorated, the base of the "comptoir" where the presiding lady officiates, consisting of a solid block of white marble; and the ceiling and walls are adorned with arabesques executed by well-known artists. Cards, nay, even chess and dominoes are prohibited, and smoking, except under an awning permanently extending outside the café, is strictly tabooed. A few years ago, says Delvan, the phenomenal bass voice of the waiter specially charged with the function of pouring out the coffee, popularly designated Lablache, attracted all Paris to the Palais Royal, his sonorous utterance of the prescribed formula, "Pas d'crème, Monsieur!" literally shaking the windows. The story goes that an old Marquise, impressed by his stentorian tones, and thinking it a pity that so fine a voice should not be cultivated for operatic purposes, obtained for him admission to the Conservatoire, where for several months he underwent the customary ordeal of exercises and scales. The benevolent lady's project, however, proved a failure; her protégé either would not or could not learn; he longed once more to wear his apron and round jacket, and at length, throwing his ambition—if he had any—to the winds, the pseudo Lablache, to the great delight of his hitherto inconsolable patrons, quietly resumed his post at the Café de la Rotonde.

In 1724, some years after the installation of the Théâtre Français in what is now the Rue de l'Ancienne Comédie, Procope, a native of Sicily, conceived the happy idea of opening a café exactly opposite the theatre. The success of his venture was prodigious from the very outset, and, before many weeks had elapsed, the Café Procope had become a recognised literary centre, among its constant patrons being Voltaire, Piron, Fontenelle, Crébillon, and Diderot. After the removal of the Comédie Française to the Rue Richelieu, the prosperity of this once famous establishment sensibly diminished, and it gradually sank to the level of a fourth-rate café, mainly frequented by the billiard-loving students of the Quartier Latin. Shortly before the outbreak of the Franco-German war, if I recollect rightly, it was finally closed, and its contents were dispersed; but what became of the table at which Voltaire formerly sat, a relic care-

fully handed down from generation to generation since the days of Procope, I have failed to discover.

More fortunate has been the lot of the Café de la Régence, the chosen resort since its foundation in 1718 of the votaries of the noble game of chess. Originally situated in one of the narrow streets demolished on the junction of the Tuilleries and the Louvre, it now occupies a prominent place in the Rue St. Honoré, facing the present site of the Comédie Française. Its reputation dates from the epoch when the unconquered Philidor measured his strength against Jean Jacques Rousseau, a struggle invariably terminating in the defeat of the latter; while the list of illustrious visitors who at different periods have figured there as spectators, includes such strangely-assorted celebrities as Voltaire and the Maréchal de Richelieu, the Emperor Joseph the Second and d'Alembert, Maurice de Saxe and General Bonaparte, Louvet, the author of "Faublas," and Benjamin Franklin. Previous to 1848, one of the most assiduous frequenters of the Café de la Régence was Alfred de Musset, a first-rate chess-player, whose usual antagonist was Provost, the excellent actor of the Théâtre Français. The poet Méry seldom missed an opportunity of watching the game; he was the chilliest mortal I ever met, always enveloped in a thick fur-lined cloak, no matter at what season of the year. While strolling on the Boulevard with the dramatist Varin one bright afternoon in May, we came across Méry, looking the picture of misery.

"Qu'avez-vous?" inquired Varin, struck by his woebegone air.

"Ce que j'ai!" dolefully replied Méry, shivering under his capacious garment, "j'ai l'hiver."

At the corner of the Rue de Navarin, in the Bréla quarter, is a tavern of modest appearance, formerly distinguished by the sign of "Au petit Rocher," but now better known as the "Cabaret Dinochau." "You may dine very well there," remarks our author, "provided that you have two francs in one pocket and—ten in the other." It is strictly a literary and artistic resort, and thirty years ago was the daily rendezvous of young poets, novelists, and journalists, many of whom have since made their mark. Among these were Henri Murger, author of the "Vie de Bohême," the photographer and aéronaut Nadar, the realistic Champfleury, Jules Noriac, Alphonse Daudet, and, last not least, the

witty humorist, Charles Monselet. I knew the latter personally, and never wished to meet a more amusing companion; he was short in stature and very stout, with small, twinkling eyes and a shrewd expression of countenance, which brightened up whenever he said anything more than usually quaint. When I made his acquaintance he was one of the mainstays of the "Figaro," and had already published several clever little volumes, some of which, especially "Les Tréteaux," and "Les Oubliés et les Dédaignés," are now scarce. He was at times addicted to sarcasm, and when mischievously inclined, rarely scrupled to indulge in it at the expense of other people, as the following anecdote will show. He was once invited to a dinner given by the manager of a minor theatre in celebration of a great success recently obtained by his company. His neighbour at table, a playwright of doubtful repute, after listening impatiently to Monselet's eulogistic remarks on the excellence of the repast, suddenly interrupted him by saying that Chose—meaning the manager—need not make such a fuss about a piece which, after all, had only been saved by the acting.

"But what can you expect," he added, "from a man who favours certain authors and neglects others? Why, would you believe it, he has three vaudevilles of mine in his 'cartons,' all safe hits, and not one of them is even put into rehearsal!"

"That is very unfortunate," gravely replied Monselet. "But—have you ever reflected that, if he did play your pieces, he might possibly not be able to give us as good a dinner as we have had to-day?"

While I write—1892—the world-renowned Tortoni is, I am told, in process of demolition. Its ancient vogue had of late years been steadily declining, and its incomparable ices and chocolate had ceased to attract the Parisian "fin de siècle." Its palmy days date from the First Empire, when Talleyrand and his inseparable companion Montrond came almost daily to admire the skill of a certain Spolar, who had abandoned the career of a barrister for the more lucrative one of professional billiard-player. The ex-Bishop of Autun was so charmed with Spolar that he invited him to his house, and subsequently organised a match between him and a provincial amateur, which resulted in the latter being mulcted to the tune of forty thousand francs. In his notice of Tortoni, Delvaux particularly mentions a waiter

named Prévost, a singular character, who invariably addressed a customer in the following terms, accompanied by a quasi-genuflection: "A thousand pardons, will monsieur have the extreme kindness to allow me to procure him anything?" With all his obsequious humility, however, Prévost took care not to neglect his own interests; "for," says our author, "if you gave him a louis to change, you might be sure that a stray coin or two would somehow or other stick to his fingers."

I do not know if the Café des Aveugles still exists, but I can remember the time when this subterranean place of entertainment was a very flourishing concern. Entering the Palais Royal from the Rue Vivienne, and turning to the left, you were suddenly startled by the sound of a drum apparently proceeding from the bowels of the earth. Glancing round, you discovered a flight of steps, which having descended, you found yourself in a kind of cellar lit with gas, where some twenty or thirty individuals, seated at small tables scattered about the room, were engaged in discussing beer and fritters. At one end of the cellar was a raised platform, occupied by four or five blind musicians perpetually at work, and producing through the medium of clarinet, violin, and flute, the most distressing cacophony that ever tortured a sensitive ear. Near the entrance a burly personage with a long black beard, attired in the traditional costume of a savage, executed fantasias on the drum; while at stated intervals a certain M. Valentin—whose daughter, by the way, I remember seeing later on at the Vaudeville as one of the Bacchantes in Clairville's "Daphnis et Chloé"—displayed his proficiency as a ventriloquist. It was a curious spectacle to witness—once.

"Some years after the publication of the 'Mystères de Paris,'" says our author, "I started on a voyage of discovery, with the intention of exploring the localities so minutely described in the earlier chapters of that famous romance, and having reached that part of Paris topographically known as the 'Cié,' carefully threaded the narrow and ill-paved Rue aux Fèves, and boldly entered the Cabaret du Lapin Blanc, fully expecting to meet there, if not the original Chourineur and Maître d'Ecole, at least types in some degree akin to them. Whatever illusions I may have cherished were soon dispelled; a glance at the stout, placidly smiling dame presiding at the 'comptoir' at once reassured me as to the

impossibility of any relationship between her and the terrible Ogresse, nor did a single one of the customers, mostly of the bourgeois class, and probably attracted thither by curiosity like myself, in any way suggest the idea that he was likely to be 'wanted.' Above the 'comptoir' was a stuffed white rabbit, minus the eyes, which had disappeared. The walls were decorated with prints and rudely executed drawings representing scenes from the 'Mystères de Paris,' and portraits of political and literary celebrities; nor must a bust of Brutus be forgotten, wearing spectacles and a gardener's hat. Such is my recollection of the once famous 'Tapis franc,' and anything more unlike the one described by the novelist it would be difficult to imagine."

In a note dated the second of February, 1862, Delvan adds: "I have just crossed through the Cité; workmen are actively demolishing the Rue aux Fèves and the adjacent streets. The Cabaret du Lapin Blanc exists no longer, save in the absorbing pages of Eugène Sue!"

Theatrical cafés abound in Paris, every Thespian temple having its special establishment either adjoining it or in its immediate vicinity. Of these perhaps the most frequented are the Café de la Porte St. Martin, and the Café des Variétés, the former being patronised by the authors and performers of the boulevard theatres, while the latter may be regarded as a general house of call for playwrights and journalists, occasionally reinforced by a sprinkling of actors. Neither of these, however, can boast of more than a local celebrity, whereas the Café Talma, forming the corner of the Passage Choiseul and the "New Street of the Little Fields," has been for the last sixty years the favourite resort of the leading dramatists, artists, and men of letters of the time. There, from 1830 to 1860, might be seen Alexandre Dumas, Balzac, Janin, Alphonse Karr, Théophile Gautier, Decamps, Isabey, and Tony Johannot; to be succeeded in after years by Victorien Sardou, the brothers Goncourt, Gustave Doré, and Baudelaire. Now and then Frédéric Soulié, when his finances were more than usually low, would drop in, and whisper a few words to Dumas, whereupon the latter would call for pen, ink, and paper, and a "bon" addressed to the treasurer of the "Siècle" would quietly find its way into Soulié's pocket. "The author of 'Monte Cristo,'" says Delvan, "had seldom enough money for himself, but he always

contrived to find some for a colleague in distress."

A brief mention of that popular resort, the Café Riche on the Boulevard des Italiens, if only in remembrance of many excellent dinners enjoyed there, may appropriately conclude this paper. The cuisine was, and no doubt still is, perfection, and the charges, although high, were not exorbitant; nor do I remember hearing them disputed, except on one occasion. A very irascible gentleman, dissatisfied with the total of the "addition" presented to him, after a stormy colloquy with the head waiter, flung the money on the table, and stalked indignantly out of the café, saying in a voice loud enough to be heard by every one in the room:

"Café Riche, indeed! They have forgotten the most important letter. It should be Café Triche."

FOR ANGÈLE'S SAKE.

A STORY IN THREE PARTS.

PART I.

THERE was no mistake about the matter, my ankle was badly sprained, at the most inopportune time, in the most inconvenient place for such an accident to befall a man. I painfully dragged myself to a log which lay near and tried to survey the situation calmly and to see any possible way out of it. But the survey was not reassuring. The great fact was that I, John Hogarth, an English tourist, lay utterly disabled for further progress beside a brook in the Jorat forest. On the other side of the brook ran a lonely footpath. A quarter of an hour earlier I had been marching jauntily along that footpath, on my way from Lausanne to Freiburg, my soul full of admiration for the "beautiful Pays de Vaud," commending the wisdom of the doctor who had rigidly prescribed two months' leave of absence from a London office—where I had overworked myself to the verge of an illness—and a walking tour in Switzerland. "It will make a new man of you," he had said, and he had been right.

A quarter of an hour earlier I had been revelling in the fact that I was a new man. I had almost thought of trying to make a sonnet about the murmuring pines, the glinting sunbeams, the gay patches of colour in the open glades, the merry tinkling brook that ran after me down-

hill. Then some evil spirit had prompted me to leap the brook, and there I lay a victim to a moment's over-exuberance of spirits.

I looked at my watch—four o'clock. I had expected to arrive at the inn where I meant to sleep about six. A quarter of an hour earlier than two hours' walk was a glorious prospect, now it was a dismal impossibility.

My ankle was giving me intense pain; for my own weight in gold I could not have repassed those steep picturesque banks. The little stream was now a great impassable gulf.

I loosened my boot and strung up my courage; the time wore on and no one came by. The shadows grew deeper; I heard the faint, far off sound of the Angelus from some forest chapel—still no one. Then it grew dusk, the distant trees became undistinguishable; I had resigned myself to the thought of a night of pain alone in the forest, when I heard the welcome sound of footsteps quick, light footsteps, coming my way, nearer and nearer, till at last in the twilight I saw the flutter of a woman's dress on the footpath. I raised my voice and cried to her to stop. She paused and looked round, half nervously I fancied.

"Who called?" she said tremulously.

Then with an effort I summoned my feeble stock of French, and shouted to her where I was and what was the matter.

She came to the brookside and looked down at me from the other bank curiously. I saw that she was young, and, to judge from her dress, a peasant.

"Mon Dieu," she cried, "but you frightened me horribly." Then in answer to my repeated enquiry: "Yes, there are two houses not so very far away; there is the sawmill, that is my father's. I am going there now, but there are so many children, we could not make room for monsieur; and there is La Gaulette, that is the forester's, and there is only the forester Rochat and his wife, and Franz Lehmann—they have plenty of room."

"But how can I get there?" I asked. "First of all I must get to the path."

"And monsieur is English?" was her somewhat irrelevant reply.

I suppose my accent struck her more forcibly than my misfortune.

"I am," I said impatiently; "but that does not settle the question of how I am to get across the brook."

"Ah," she rejoined, as if a new light

fell on the subject; "perhaps I had better go and call Franz. He is Madame Rochat's nephew; he could carry you—easily," she added half contemptuously, and she left me.

About ten minutes later a stalwart young fellow came at a swinging pace through the trees to where I lay; raising his broad hat courteously, he said:

"Angèle says you have hurt yourself and cannot walk; I have come to help you to reach my uncle's house, where we will do all we can for you."

He said it quite simply, as if finding and taking compassion on a disabled tourist were the most natural thing in the world. Then he helped me up, mounted me, in spite of my remonstrances, on his back, and set off with me at a round pace towards the forester's, where he assured me I should find shelter and every care until my sprained foot would permit me to proceed on my journey.

"It is a good thing Angèle found you," he added; "it would have been dreary work sleeping out of doors under such conditions."

A few minutes later we came in sight of a long, straggling, broad-eaved homestead, at the door of which an elderly man and woman gave me as warm a welcome as if I had been a long desired guest, and as much sympathy and care as I could have expected had my own mother been at hand to bathe and bandage my swollen foot.

The bandaging was a long business, and occupied both Madame Rochat and Franz, while Angèle flitted to and fro, opening and shutting doors and cupboards, under orders from the forester's wife, but not to that good lady's entire satisfaction.

"Nay," she cried at last, "what is the child thinking of? This is not the bundle of linen I meant—this was not on the lower shelf of the press. Here, I must go myself, and thou canst go home if thou canst not make thyself properly useful."

"Bien, madame," replied the girl demurely. "I will wait, however, till Franz is at liberty to escort me. It is so dark, and it gave me such a turn to hear monsieur call from the brookside just now."

"Thou art a little goose," was Madame Rochat's rejoinder.

I noticed, however, that Franz was not long in finding himself at liberty to fulfil her wishes.

"It is time she was home," he said by way of excuse; "they will wonder where

she is, and her stepmother will be angry." At which Madame Rochat shrugged her shoulders.

Such was my introduction to La Gaulette and its inmates, and as a bad sprain takes a long while to heal, I had every opportunity of improving my acquaintance with them.

The forester was a typical Vandois, dark-haired, ruddy, and broad-built. His heart was bound up in the forest where he had been born and brought up, and of which he knew every aspect and every nook. His wife was not of the Pays de Vaud. She and her nephew Franz were natives of the German canton Glarus. She was an eager, bustling little woman, so brisk and cleanly that she passed for the pattern housewife of the scattered forest hamlet. This worthy couple's notions of hospitality were quite patriarchal. It was impossible to persuade them to accept even a nominal sum for my board during my enforced stay under their roof.

"Do not insist, monsieur," the forester said finally; "it is enough for us to have the pleasure of your company, and to hear something of that wide world which I for one shall never see."

"Moreover," added his wife, "we are not poor folk; we do not need to take payment from a guest whom Providence has sent to us. Besides, monsieur, did you not tell us that you are the only son of your mother? We, too, have an only son who is far away among strangers. For his sake we make you welcome."

She laid her hand on mine as she spoke, and I saw a tear gleam in her eye. After that I said no more about payment, and as day after day slipped on, I felt myself more and more at home in their simple, kindly ways, and more reconciled to the sudden end which had come to my scarcely commenced walking tour.

One of my chief resources during my imprisonment was to limp across the yard into the atelier, where Franz Lehmann carried on his handicraft of wood-carving, and there to sit and talk to him when his work permitted it, or to watch him in silence when the more difficult or delicate parts of it required his undivided attention. I found Franz a very interesting companion. He was equally a good talker and a good listener; he could give an opinion on European politics, and knew something of the ways of London from hearsay; he was curious to hear more, but he had no wish to go there.

No, he said, he should never leave Switzerland. It had been a great effort to abandon his native canton and settle in the Pays de Vaud. Of course, every man stood up for his own birthplace, but, without partiality, what country could compare to Switzerland, and what part of Switzerland was more beautiful than the Glarus? He was never weary of singing the praises of his own "pays," as he called the Linthal, where he was born.

"Ah, monsieur," he would always conclude, "you must go there some day. You must see our valley—the valley of the Linth, and the Glaronese Alps at the head of it. Ah, those are indeed mountains! Not for height—there are many higher, but for beauty, for wildness. The sources of the Rhine are there, among the mountains; in deep, wild chasms into which daylight can scarcely pierce. You should hear the roar that swells up from them at the melting of the snows. Then higher up is the eternal whiteness, glowing in the morning and evening light; and the Alpine roses grow thick, and the chamois leaps fearlessly from rock to rock, because only the most daring hunters can track him there. Have you ever followed a chamois, monsieur?"

I shook my head. I was a mere novice at mountain climbing, I admitted.

"It is Franz who could give you a lesson in that," said the forester. "A year ago he was one of the expert guides of his district."

"I wish you would give me a lesson, Franz," I said. "Why should we not start off when my foot is all right?"

For answer Franz looked embarrassed. The forester grunted.

"Yes, indeed, why not?" he said.

I saw I had made an unfortunate suggestion, so I changed the subject.

The next day, however, as I sat in the atelier, Franz reverted to it.

"Monsieur," he said abruptly, colouring up as he spoke, "I will tell you how it is I have given up being a guide. I did not care to speak of it last night before my uncle; he does not approve." Then he worked on rapidly for a few minutes. "I have often told you," he began again, "how I was born and how I grew up among the mountains. From my boyhood I have been a guide. I passed my examination when I was two-and-twenty. I had learnt wood-carving as a winter trade. Last autumn I came here to La Gaulette on business about the division of an inheri-

tance. I only thought to stay a month or so, but," he stammered and hesitated, "something happened which changed all my plans, and has ended in my staying here altogether. It was for Angèle's sake. I had never thought anything of any girl before I saw her. I asked her to be my wife—I mean I wanted her to go back with me to Linthal. But she would not. She said she would not marry a guide. I asked her more than once. Then she told me she would take me if I gave up risking my life, as she calls it, on the mountains, and settle down here, near to her people. They were hard conditions, but what could I do? She is more to me than life itself. For her sake I would give up all. And, indeed," he added, "I have climbed more mountains than most men of my age. I can recall at will the memory of the everlasting snowfield, of the outstretched glacier, the labyrinth of valleys and peaks under every changing sky. A man cannot have everything, and when one wins a bride like Angèle, one must not grudge a small sacrifice."

But I saw that the sacrifice was not so small, and for my part I did not think the winning of Angèle such a priceless guerdon. In fact, from what I had seen of Franz's liege lady, I did not consider her worthy of the intense love she had kindled in his noble heart. She was pretty, but beyond that I could not see any particular charm about her. She spent a good deal of her time at La Gaulette, by way of helping Madame Rochat in the house and earning a few francs; the sawyer's family being numerous and not too well provided with this world's goods.

"I do not altogether approve of the match for my nephew," said Madame Rochat confidentially to me one day. "Franz is an excellent fellow, as you can see for yourself—honest and generous as the light of day, and with the temper of an angel. Moreover, he had saved quite a large sum from his earnings as a guide. He might have married a girl with a good 'dot' in our own village, and there, as luck will have it, he sets his affections on Angèle Méris, and he's not the sort to change when he has given his love."

"Well," I said philosophically, "let us hope he will be as happy with her as he deserves to be."

"Oh, he'll be happy," said Madame Rochat, somewhat contemptuously, "he won't even see her faults. She's a bit of a slattern, you know, monsieur, and

scatterbrained—oh, but scatterbrained. However, I think she means well, but she's been badly brought up, and altogether I would rather he had married better and stuck to being a guide."

I agreed with her, and perhaps she let Franz know I had done so, for he also made confidences to me.

"My aunt is a little hard on Angèle," he said; "she does not remember that the child is young. She will not be twenty till the New Year, and I am ten years older. I shall be a guide to her, and teach her some things which her stepmother has neglected. Her stepmother is not kind to her, monsieur. I do not think any one loved her truly before I came. It was a little hard on her, was it not? But when we are married she shall know what love and happiness mean."

Madame Rochat was quite right; his love was great enough to cover all her faults.

I had been several weeks at La Gaulette before my sprain was so far recovered that I might have continued my walk. When I spoke of leaving, however, I was met by vehement dissuasion from each one of the household. They had counted on keeping me much longer, they said.

"Are you wearying of our quiet life, monsieur?" asked Franz, a little reproachfully.

"No," I assured him, "on the contrary, the charm of it grew upon me; but——"

"We don't care about the 'buts,'" interrupted the forester curtly, "we know all that. We know, too, that your foot would not carry you two days along Swiss roads. The best thing you can do is to stay quietly here as long as you can. There is no better air in the world than one breathes in these pine forests, and I must show you some of the mysteries of our craft now that you can walk a little, and you must see our show places—Montherond and the Tour de la Reine Berthe, and what not."

"And then," put in Madame Rochat, "there's are Franz's English lessons. He is making such progress, and we are all so proud of his learning."

That was the straw that turned the scale. Franz was so anxious to learn English, and I was so eager to prove my skill as a teacher. So I stayed.

"Monsieur Jean," cried Angèle, hurrying down the road to meet me one evening as I sauntered home, "Monsieur Jean, there is a gentleman who has come to en-

quire after your health. He arrived an hour ago. He drove from Lausanne. Le père Rochat has sent the carriage away. The monsieur is waiting. He says he is your cousin, and he gave us his card."

"My cousin!" I said, as I took the card. "What cousin?"

Then I read Eustace Ferrier's name, and I stood still to wonder what could have prompted him, of all men in the world, to feel any solicitude for me. Not any special friendship between us. Cousins we might be, but the tie of blood was our only bond of union. As boys we had never got on together; as men our lots in life lay very far apart. He was master of a fine fortune, a man of expensive tastes and habits; I was a poor, overworked, underpaid London clerk. Our paths had not crossed for years. No wonder I was surprised at his visit.

"Come, Monsieur Jean," went on Angèle, "he has already waited so long. Ah, there he is!"

Yes, there he was walking briskly towards me with his hand outstretched. He looked a good deal older, but not less handsome than when I had seen him last. As we shook hands I was conscious of a very distinct feeling—that I was not in the least glad to see him.

"Here you are, old man," he cried effusively; "and how well you are looking. Your hostess told me you would be back directly. Directly has stretched itself out to an hour and a half; but I have not been bored; I have been simply captivated with the whole thing. Now, pray say you're glad to see me and ask me how I got here. You're just the same silent fellow as of old, and I'm dying to enter into explanations."

"We can't both talk at once," I said, and even to myself my voice sounded anything but cordial, "so you fire away with your explanations."

"Well, to begin at the very beginning, I have been staying in your neighbourhood down in Shropshire. I went over to call on your people—by the way, what a charming girl your sister Rachel has grown up to be. It is delightful to suddenly find oneself the unexpected possessor of an undeniably pretty cousin. After my first visit I saw them often. I happened to mention to my aunt—your mater, you know—that I was on the point of starting for my annual Alpine tour, and nothing would content her but that I must come and look you up. Your accounts of yourself have made her anxious. She worries to think of you

stranded among barbarous mountain peasants. She thinks you are ill again, that your sprained ankle was a cloak for something worse. Rachel, too, asked me to come, so though it is rather a digression from the plan I have made, I have come, and now I find I must foist myself on the hospitality of these good people for one night at least."

While he had been talking we had reached the door of the house, where the forester met us.

"Ah, monsieur!" he said, addressing me, "you have met your visitor. He has come to see how you are getting on. We tell him that the best way for him to judge is to stay here, so I have sent away the coachman. You will be pleased to have some news from home, I am sure."

I tried to find proper words to express my thanks for his thoughtfulness, but it was Eustace who took the burden of the reply upon himself.

"You are too amiable, monsieur," he said, suavely, "and since you assure me that my presence will in no wise incommode you, I will accept your hospitality with pleasure. I should be sorry to leave this beautiful neighbourhood after such a cursory glimpse as I have had at present."

The forester's eyes brightened at this compliment to his beloved forest. I saw at a glance that his heart was won.

"Monsieur is quite right," he said, "the Jorat is a land worth seeing thoroughly."

The supper-table was very animated that night. Eustace was an excellent linguist, and his well-turned phrases expressed most happily all that could be said by a guest in his position.

"I fear, monsieur," said Madame Rochat, as we sat down to the table, "that our fare will seem very humble to you."

"Madame," interrupted Eustace, "your apologies make me feel quite uncomfortable. With a dish of trout fried to the perfection of these, what can a man desire except an appetite worthy of the occasion?"

"There, Angèle," said Franz, as the girl handed round the dish, "and thou wert in such dread lest monsieur would not think them good."

Angèle blushed and hung her head.

"Did you fancy I should be very difficult, Angèle?" said Eustace, as he helped himself. "I am the easiest person in the world, and my idea of bliss—in Switzerland at least—would be to have

you to fry trout for me after a hard day's climbing."

Angèle glanced at him furtively. It was Franz who spoke.

"Is monsieur a mountain climber?" he asked eagerly.

"I have that pretension," replied Eustace. "I have belonged to the Alpine Club for some years."

"I wonder," said Franz, "if you have ever been in my country."

"Which is your country? Somewhere in Eastern Switzerland to judge from your accent."

"Monsieur is right," said Franz, looking impressed by so much discrimination. "I came from Glarus—from Linthal."

"Ab," cried Eustace, "I have long wished to see the Glaronese Alps. I suppose you have some knowledge of them?"

"Some knowledge," repeated Franz. "Why, monsieur, no man knows them better—I am a guide."

Angèle's face had flushed. She set down her dish with a jerk on the side-board.

"Franz," she broke in, "that is not true. Thou hast been a guide—thou art not one now. No, monsieur, he risks his life no longer."

"Angèle," began Madame Rochat, reprovingly.

But Eustace looked at her with an amused smile, and asked:

"Since when?"

"Since last New Year," she replied demurely.

"That reminds me," said Eustace, "that some one talked to me before I started of the perils of mountaineering. I made some sort of a promise about not running risks, which, however, will not prevent my having a look at the Glaronese Alps."

"You will break your promise, monsieur," cried Angèle hotly; "but you will expect her to keep hers."

"I didn't say she had made me any promise," he rejoined laughing.

"Angèle," said Madame Rochat severely,

"we are ready for the poulet. Monsieur must excuse her, she is too ready to talk."

"Who was it begged you to take care of yourself in Switzerland—was it Rachel?" I asked him after supper, as we smoked.

"My dear Jack, don't be curious," he replied. "And above all, don't jump to conclusions."

It was all very well to say that I was not to jump to conclusions; I was sure that he had meant me to jump at the conclusion that my little sister returned the interest which he professed to take in her.

Now if there was one man more than another in whom I did not wish Rachel to take an interest, it was our cousin Eustace Ferrier.

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MISS LATIMER OF BRYANS.

BY ELEANOR C. PRICE.

Author of "Alexia," "Red Towers," "The Little One," etc.

CHAPTER XXIX. AN ELDER BROTHER.

"BUT what a horrid, disgraceful girl!" cried Alice Nugent indignantly.

She had been listening with breathless interest in her own room before dinner to Otto's account of his discovery that afternoon, and of his interview with Arthur. It appeared that Arthur had flown into a furious passion, had used a good deal of strong language, had sworn that he would not endure to be followed and spied upon; had generally, in short, made a fool of himself. It was evident that if he had had to do with any one less cool and self-possessed than his brother, the scene might have had serious consequences. As it was, Otto had been in momentary fear that some servant might hear an angry voice and open the door, or that the rest of the party might come in while Arthur was still raging.

"I took it quietly," Otto said. "I merely said that, as he could not possibly mean anything serious, it was hard on the girl, not to mention the man she is engaged to. He told me that I knew nothing about it, but I fancy that I know more than he does. By degrees I calmed him down, and by the time we met you I don't think there was much to be noticed. Poppy is not very quick. Did you notice any signs of a recent breeze?"

"I thought he looked rather pale and sulky. Poppy, poor dear! she noticed nothing, I'm sure. She believes in him

ridiculously. As to me, you know I never idealised Arthur. He has always been spoilt beyond endurance, I think, and as for the sweetness of his temper, that only exists, I believe, when nothing goes against him. He is just like a child, very good as long as he has a supply of new toys. No, I am not one of dear Arthur's worshippers. Never was. This is serious, though, Otto. What are you going to do? That odious girl! Who could have guessed that she was lurking about the farm? And it was my fault, for I almost sent him back to look for you. Had you any kind of suspicion before?"

"Well, if I could have believed in such stupidity, I did not quite like the way he was absorbed in Miss Farrant's picture. I think he saw I did not, for he lost his temper a little then."

"You didn't tell me that."

"It was not worth repeating. After all, I knew very well that he was not over head and ears in love with Poppy. It was not very unnatural that he should admire somebody else. But to-day it seemed to me that things were going a little too far."

"I should think so. And the girl—she ought to be ashamed of herself—Poppy has done everything for her."

"I wonder why she accepted the artist—only the other day."

"As a blind, do you think? Otto, this is really dreadful. We are in the middle of a sensation novel. This dull old Bryans the scene of it all! It would be rather amusing if Arthur wasn't your brother, and if one wasn't so sorry for Poppy."

"Ah! It is real, not fictitious emotion," said Otto, who thought he knew a little about psychology.

He was pacing slowly up and down the room. Alice poked the fire and crouched

down before it, holding her head between her hands.

"What are you going to do?" she repeated presently.

"That is the question," said Otto.

"Am I going to do anything?"

"Don't you think you must?"

"Do you? Well, this is my view of the situation. Knowing Arthur to be an impulsive young ass, I suspect that he came here half bored and ready to pick up any amusement that might fall in his way. I feel a little sorry for the old chap, you know. He was almost made to propose to Poppy Latimer. Of course she is very nice, but ten Bryans Courts wouldn't have made me do it. Well, then this girl falls in his way—pretty and ignorant, and rather spoilt like himself. I don't believe it is so much her fault as his. She looks unhappy. To-day, even before I came upon them, she looked wretched. All the—well, the nonsense—was on his side."

"That is all very well," said Alice, with authority. "If she had been a nice girl, nothing of the sort could ever have been begun. And if she is unhappy, she ought to be."

"Well, that does not matter now. The question is this: am I bound to tell anybody? Arthur will be careful now, I expect. He flew into a rage, but he was heartily ashamed of himself all the time. He is weak and self-indulgent; but he is not quite such a fool, I think, as to face the idea of giving up everything for a girl like that. Am I to spoil all his prospects by breaking off his engagement? I tell you, I believe that that scene this afternoon will go far to bring him to his senses. What would my mother say, do you think?"

Alice rocked herself gently backwards and forwards, staring into the fire.

"Your mother! Poor thing! I should not like to tell her," she said. "All her beautiful house of cards—to be the puff of wind that topples it over! And she so happy and contented! No, my dear."

"Yes, it would be an awful business. But, after all, it would be Arthur's fault, not ours. Mother would have to bear it. She is not the centre difficulty. Ought Poppy to know?"

Alice's usual readiness had deserted her. She did not speak for a minute or two, then got up and walked across to the looking-glass, where she gravely examined a pair of scorched cheeks.

"I look as if I had been doing some-

thing wrong," she observed. "My dear Otto, you know all about it, much better than I can tell you. Some people would say you must do right, regardless of consequences. I believe they would tell you that you ought to tell some friend of Poppy's—her aunt, or Mr. Cantillon—and leave it in their hands and hers to do as they like. Well, that would mean no end of rage and scandal, and would completely spoil Poppy's happiness, even if she chose to stick to him, which she hardly could, I think. You have been saying yourself that you think he will show more sense in future. Let's hope he will. Poppy is very fond of him, poor soul, and I dare say he will be all right when he is married, and has more to think about. A smash now would be very hard on her. I should leave things alone for the present, I think. Time enough before the wedding for Arthur to hang himself, if he really can't help it. Pity the wedding can't be sooner."

"So I thought; but Miss Latimer has absurd ideas of a grand function down here."

"Yes, silly old thing. And now Poppy has arranged for these precious friends of hers to be married at the same time."

"You don't say so!" cried Otto, with a whistle of dismay.

"She has, indeed. She told me so. And to think how they will all hate it, except herself!" and Alice burst into an irresistible peal of laughter. "Well," she said, suddenly becoming grave again, "I am dreadfully sorry for her. Otto, how glad I am I was not an heiress, and that nobody made you marry me!"

"You would have had more sense than Poppy Latimer. You would never have looked at me. Now, little woman, do you know that we shall be late for dinner?"

Five minutes later, as they were going down together, he said to her:

"Then you think I am to hold my tongue?"

"For the present—yes," she answered decidedly.

About the same time Geoffrey Thorne was walking over to Church Corner. He had not, as yet, found his engagement a very dreadful thing to bear. Maggie liked him, and when they were together alone, or with no witness but her grandfather, she put on a little playful manner which made intercourse pleasant and easy.

She chattered about nothing, teased him in a friendly way, and only seemed bored

by any attempt at demonstrativeness. Geoffrey troubled her little in that way.

Taking up his life with a sort of dogged resignation, he did not find things so very bad. They improved after the first day, when the sight of Miss Latimer with Maggie in the garden had almost taken away his power of speech. After that he avoided any chance of meeting her. His own relations behaved well and kindly; his father was ready to make every allowance for old Mr. Farrant's oddities, and Lucy—for this he was most grateful, and she knew it—soon made up her mind to accept the inevitable, went to see Maggie, asked her to the farm, and treated her with a rough, indulgent good nature, all for Geoff's sake.

That afternoon, when he came in from hunting, she told him that Maggie had been there, and then she told him about the visit of Miss Latimer and her friends; and then, being resolved to keep nothing from Geoffrey, she told him how Captain Nugent had wandered off on the pretext of meeting his brother, how he had been a long time gone, and then how, when he joined them with his brother, he had looked extremely queer.

"I don't know if he overtook Maggie," said Lucy in her downright way. "Cook said she heard voices in the front room; she thought they were the two gentlemen, waiting for us."

"I thought you said that Maggie went away without seeing them?"

"Yes—but it is just possible that Captain Nugent caught a glimpse of her through the window as they drove up. The ladies did not; but he came to the pony's head. I looked at that brother of his," said Lucy, "but he has one of those foxy faces that tell one nothing. I hardly know which of them I dislike most."

Geoffrey asked no more questions, but he went in the evening to Church Corner.

He met the old man in the passage, slowly hobbling towards the stairs.

"It's you, Geoffrey, is it?" said Mr. Farrant. "Well, how d'ye do, and good-bye. I'm off to bed, as tired as a dog. Maggie has gone up to see that my room is all right. She'll be down directly."

"Can I help you upstairs?" said the young man.

"Ay, you may as well." As they slowly mounted, he muttered in Geoffrey's ear: "Was your sister very hard on her to-day? She came in crying. I'm tired of asking what's the matter, so I'm going

to bed. Can't stand these tempers. See if you can bring her to reason."

Having helped him upstairs, Geoffrey ran down again and waited for Maggie in the parlour. He stood and looked round him with eyes that did not, however, take in much. In his mind there was an odd mixture of anger, resolution, and gentleness. He was not accustomed to being beaten, he told himself, and he did not mean to be beaten again. He meant to keep what he had got. He hated Arthur Nugent with the most cordial strength. He had borne his success with Poppy Latimer. That was likely and reasonable, and she cared for him. But that he should choose to amuse himself, in spite of all honour and good feeling, by carrying on a flirtation with this unhappy girl—and even now in spite of her engagement—was too much. No man could be expected to bear it. Sometimes Geoffrey knew quite certainly in his own mind that the village gossip had been true; and Lucy knew that he knew it; but she had forced herself to agree with him in laying the blame chiefly if not entirely on Captain Nugent. She only divined her brother's thoughts, for after his engagement he made it plain that he would not discuss the subject.

Geoffrey was still standing in front of the fire, waiting, when Maggie came slowly and unwillingly into the room. There were traces of tears on her face; she was flushed and her eyes were heavy; all her playfulness and brightness had departed. She came up to Geoffrey in a careless, mechanical way, and perhaps felt the sternness in his eyes, though she would not lift hers to meet them.

"What is the matter with you?" he said abruptly. "Your grandfather says you have been crying all the evening. Tell me, Maggie; I have a right to know."

"Don't be cross with me!" murmured Maggie, and tears sprang again, shining on her eyelashes.

"I am not cross with you. Whose fault is it—Lucy's or mine? I am sorry I was not at home this afternoon."

"No, it's not your fault. Lucy was very nice to me—only I wish you would let me know when you are going out hunting."

"I will another time," Geoffrey said.

His feeling about her had been from the first more like anxiety than anger, and now in her presence not a trace of sternness could hold its own. The troubled face was so pathetic and so young.

"Something is wrong," he said, after a pause, during which she sat down in her own little chair and dried her eyes. "I can't bear to see you like this. Is it our engagement that worries you?"

"Do you want to give me up? You well may," the girl answered hastily.

Geoffrey saw that she was strangely excited, as well as unhappy. He looked at her steadily. He thought for the moment, forgetting all other considerations, that he would go straight to Captain Nugent and have it out with him. Then, the first impulse of anger past, his thoughts became quieter. He would do nothing in a hurry. Any indignation for himself, too, must come second to the duty of helping her.

Sitting in a tall chair close beside her, he leaned forward and laid his hand lightly on her shoulder.

"Look here, Maggie," he said, "something has happened this afternoon to worry you. You can't get it out of your head, but that's because you are forgetting something else."

"What am I forgetting?"

"Only a thing which ought to stand between you and worries. Only me, dear."

It might have been the sympathy of an unselfish friend, so true, calm, and unexaggerated.

"I wish you belonged to me," the girl said, after a moment of passionate silence, during which both could almost hear the beating of their hearts.

"Don't I?" said Geoffrey.

"Oh, not like this! I wish you were my brother—or a girl."

Geoffrey smiled faintly to himself, looking down on the bent dark head so near him.

"What would you do if I were your brother—or a girl?"

"Perhaps I might be able to tell you, then. Do you see how dreadfully lonely I am?" she broke out rather breathlessly. "And can you imagine what it is to have to go through fire, with nobody to save one? To love the fire, too!"

"Suppose you don't talk in parables?" Geoffrey said very gently. "I will promise you this; if you will trust me, and tell me all about it, I will behave exactly as your brother would, if you had one, or possibly better."

"I think you are the best man that ever lived."

"No; I am an uninteresting old elder brother."

"But you—— No, of course I can't tell you. What nonsense, Geoffrey! How can you expect it? You, of all people in the world. Why, you might be so furious. You might kill me!"

"Or myself, perhaps!"

She turned round suddenly and looked at him. He was sad enough, nervous enough, but he was smiling, and his good dark eyes met hers calmly and bravely.

"Ah, no!" she said; "you wouldn't care enough for that."

She flung herself back in her chair, and stared at the fire silently for some time. He was impatient, but did not show it.

"I cannot tell you," she said at last. "The dreadful thing is that I should like to be good, and can't. Do you know, there is a person in this world who takes away all my senses. When I see him I go mad. That is the only way to understand it. I couldn't have believed it possible that I should ever listen to him at all, and yet I do, and when I do, I love it. One moment it is happiness and the next it is misery. It is fearfully wicked. I am perfectly heartless and ungrateful, I am false to my friends, I am a beast and a wretch. He has got this power over me, and it is half my life. I can't escape, I'm not sure that I want to—and yet—oh, yes, I do! indeed I do."

"Yes; and you saw him this afternoon?"

"Yes; and what frightens me so dreadfully is, that Mr. Otto Nugent came down the garden just at that moment and found us. That is the awful part of it. He will tell everybody, don't you think so? And what will happen then?"

Geoffrey turned white and bit his lips. This was indeed a terrible dilemma. And he could not, try as he would, keep a certain hardness out of his voice when he spoke to her again.

"Now that I know this, Maggie, I must ask for something more. It will be best for yourself and for every one else. You must tell me the whole story, when you first met Captain Nugent in this way, how many times you have met him—the whole truth, in fact."

Maggie looked round, pale and frightened, starting up from her chair.

"You are angry—you are unkind——" she began.

"No," Geoffrey said. "Sit down again. I am not reproaching you. You have been very foolish, of course—but I am thankful

that you have told me. As for him——" he stopped short.

"You will not speak to him?"

"Not unless I am obliged to do so. I will wait to see what Mr. Otto Nugent does. You will give me your promise never to meet him or listen to him again, and I shall be guided by circumstances."

"You are very angry. You will let it out—you will tell somebody. Oh, why did I trust you!"

"Because you knew that you could," Geoffrey answered. "And it is not only for your sake, remember, that I must be careful. Think of Miss Latimer."

His eyes flashed. Maggie, staring at him, thought she had not known that he could look so handsome or so angry. She hid her face in her hands.

"Don't you suppose that that is half the misery?" she whispered.

Then his gentleness returned; and presently she found herself telling him all he wanted to know, more freely, and also more truly, perhaps, than if he had been her brother or a girl.

It was a strange hour that they passed together there in the old room, while the fire died down, and a low wind moaned in the windows. But Geoffrey thought better of his poor little fiancée when he went out into the darkness.

What would Arthur Nugent's brother choose to do? What did Geoffrey wish him to do? He almost thought, now, that Poppy should be released from that man whatever it might cost her. This, however, was no business of his. His business was to protect Maggie, and by some quieter means than horsewhipping Arthur Nugent. That he felt tolerably sure of being able to do.

It was characteristic of Geoffrey that with the whole truth clear to him, and his vaguest suspicions too fully confirmed, he had no thought of saving himself from future complications by breaking off his engagement and leaving the country.

He had taken up his burden and would carry it to the end. The securing of Poppy's happiness, it is true, began to seem a doubtful thing; it was so very plain now that the man she loved was not and never could be worthy of her. Yet in one way, Geoffrey's new discoveries comforted him a little. It was a great thing to have gained Maggie's full confidence, and to be sure of having some kind of influence over her. He was not altogether sorry, when he thought it over, that Otto Nugent should

be aware of his brother's way of amusing himself. It would certainly be the interest of the Nugents to bring Arthur to his senses by one means or another.

Geoffrey told Lucy nothing, and was so unresponsive that she could not ask much. On Sunday it was a relief that the Nugents were not seen at church, Poppy and her aunt being alone together. Both faces, it seemed to Geoffrey as he looked at them, expressed a serene and peaceful happiness. A soft ray of December sunshine fell through one of the dim old windows on Poppy's head, lighting up her "fair hair and silver brows" with the radiance that might belong to a saint. Geoffrey gazed, forgetting where he was, remembering that evening in the church porch at Herzheim, when she stood in the sunset light with a shadowy background of painted martyrs, faint and vague, her grey eyes softly dreaming in the first presence of all that was to follow. Geoffrey gazed till his lady turned her head a little and looked at him. Then his eyes fell, and when he lifted them again it was to fix his whole attention on the Rector.

Mr. Cantillon was not quite like himself that day. He was less calm than usual, and yet more solemn, less unconscious; and yet the more sensitive and understanding of his hearers could feel that with a slight sense of effort there was something unusually exalted, some kind of triumph, some new wonder of thankfulness, under the hardly perceptible agitation of his look and voice.

Of course it was only Fanny Latimer and Poppy who really understood him. The other person who loved him best, Geoffrey, could only feel that he was a little strange, that there was something; and Geoffrey, unable to imagine any subject of deep excitement in Bryans except that of which his own thoughts were full, suspected that the Rector knew everything.

This suspicion took him to the Rector's house that afternoon. If he really knew, the temptation to share the anxiety, the responsibility, was irresistible.

He came in and found Mr. Cantillon pacing up and down his study, an unusual sign of restlessness. He received Geoffrey with a smile of such sunny happiness, with such a new brightness in the eyes that searched his face in a kind of affectionate curiosity, that the young man, whose thoughts were full of tragedy and difficulty, hardly knew how to look at him,

and felt a confusion which Mr. Cantillon seemed to see and understand. For he only smiled more.

"How's this, my dear Thorne?" he said gently, after a moment's hesitation. "I believe somebody has told you."

It did not occur to Geoffrey that there might be more than one thing to be told. A wild sequence of ideas chased each other through his brain. Was it all broken off? Were the whole Nugent family gone for good? Had she not cared for him after all? Was the Rector so much pleased that he could smile over the catastrophe which struck even Geoffrey as under any circumstances painful?

"You are glad, sir? But I don't quite know," he muttered, staring. "She was too good," and his voice failed entirely.

"Too good!" repeated the Rector, still smiling. "Too good to waste her life any longer; however, that may be a selfish view. I thought you knew, Geoffrey; I saw it in your face. Now, may I ask who told you?"

"I had some reason for thinking—a slight suspicion," Geoffrey stammered out.

"Had you—had you really?" said the Rector, with a touch of sharpness. "I wonder how such a report can have got abroad?"

"In a village like this things are always——" Geoffrey found something in his manner which bewildered him more and more.

Now his face suddenly cleared up, and the happy smile returned.

"Well, Thorne; well, won't you congratulate me? The village has no business to think anything of the kind; but I can't be very angry with it, or with anybody else."

"I suppose we ought all to congratulate ourselves?"

"Yes, you ought—but me first of all." He stopped for a moment, his eyes wandering away to the photograph on his writing-table. "Great changes in Bryans!" he said. "But happiness may come to the old, you see, as well as to the young. Of course we shall wait till after—— By-the-bye, is it true that your wedding is to be on the same day as Miss Latimer's?"

"I believe she wishes it to be so," Geoffrey answered absently.

He had no wish to enter on that painful subject now. Following the Rector's eyes, he had suddenly come to understand, and at the bottom of his heart he was sorry, for he did not love Miss Fanny Latimer.

But no one who loved the Rector could refuse to rejoice in his joy. Geoffrey only wondered a little that his preoccupied thoughts had never read the story told by that picture in the study, and by a thousand other little signs, no doubt, to eyes that had intelligence.

"I wish you every happiness," he said; and the earnestness of his tone satisfied the Rector, who at this moment was little troubled by outside things.

Geoffrey soon went away, smiling rather bitterly, and chopping at the heads of the grass on his road. All was unchanged it seemed. Otto Nugent had said nothing; therefore he could say nothing; and Arthur Nugent, Maggie's lover, would one of these days be Porphyria's husband and master of Bryans. So earth arranges its matters, and heaven does not interfere.

A LONG CAPTIVITY.

It is not often that we have the opportunity of reading the inner history of revolt and war in savage lands, written by an eyewitness of most of the events. Such a book,* however, we have before us now, telling us the fatal history of the revolt of the Mahdi against Egyptian rule, and the horrible results thereof. Major Wingate tells the story in Father Ohrwalder's own words, having not only had a rough translation of his manuscript before him, but also having had many personal interviews with him for official purposes—Major Wingate being Director of Military intelligence, Egyptian Army. Kordofan, it may be remarked before proceeding with the story, is a district lying to the west and south-west of Khartum.

Father Ohrwalder and his party left Cairo in December, 1880; on the fourth of January they landed at Sawakin; and, journeying by Berber, arrived at Khartum in twenty-eight days. After a short stay at Khartum, the journey was continued to El Obeld, towards the western boundary of Kordofan, under the escort of Slatin Bey, who had just been appointed Governor-General of Darfur, a district beyond Kordofan. At El Obeld Father Ohrwalder, being bound further on, left his party and pursued his way to Delen, a place in Dar

* "Ten Years' Captivity in the Mahdi's Camp—1882-1892." From the original manuscript of Father Joseph Ohrwalder, late priest of the Austrian Mission Station at Delen, in Kordofan. By Major F. R. Wingate, R.A. Sampson Low, Marston and Co.

Nuba, which is a district to the south-west of Kordofan, where was his mission station, and where he arrived on the fifth of December, 1881. Here he found the country rich and fertile, well-wooded and well-watered, and abounding in game; while the people were pleasant and well-disposed, industrious and happy. Here he lived, working happily and contented under his superior, Father Bonomi, until April, 1882, when the first murmurs of the storm which was to overwhelm the Sudan were heard at Delen.

For some time past a Dervish had been tramping the country, striving by the force of religious fanaticism to arouse revolt. Undisturbed by the Government, he collected a small body of followers and openly set up the banner of revolt. He was then invited to go and see the Governor-General of Khartum, and, upon his refusal, a very few troops were sent to take him, but were defeated owing to carelessness of their officers, and very few escaped alive. Meanwhile the Dervish Mohammed Ahmed—whom we know as the Mahdi—retired to Gedir, in Dar Nuba, awaiting developments on the part of the Government. While the Mahdi was at Gedir, his reputation as a miracle-worker grew, and numbers flocked to his standard, including a great many who did not believe in his miracles—namely, the slave merchants. This belief in the Mahdi's miraculous power was by no means decreased by a victory he obtained over an Egyptian force led on by Rashid Bey, whose troops were led into an ambush, and defeated and massacred, with hardly any loss at all on the part of the Dervishes. Another Egyptian force was massacred on the seventh of January, 1882, and the Mahdi, having increased so in power, determined to besiege El Obeid; various military stations in Kordofan having in the meanwhile fallen into his hands, the garrisons having been massacred with terrible atrocities. Here is the description of the Mahdi. "His outward appearance was strangely fascinating; he was a man of strong constitution, very dark complexion, and his face always wore a pleasant smile, to which he had by long practice accustomed himself. Under this smile gleamed a set of singularly white teeth, and between the two upper middle ones was a V-shaped space, which in the Sudan is considered a sign that the owner will be lucky. His mode of conversation, too, had by training become exceptionally pleasant and sweet. As a messenger of God, he

pretended to be in direct communication with the Deity. All orders which he gave were supposed to come to him by inspiration, and it became therefore a sin to refuse to obey them; disobedience to the Mahdi's orders was tantamount to resistance to the will of God, and was therefore punishable by death." He appointed three Khalifas under him, who were in reality his Generals; he devised a strict military organisation, and formulated a severe code of laws, in his character of religious reformer. All these reforms were brought about while he was in Gedir, from whence he set out to besiege El Obeid, which was defended by Said Pasha.

Meanwhile, the little party of missionaries at Delen were without any certain news, the only sure sign that something was wrong being the renewed activity of the slave-dealers, and of a tribe called the Baggara, who had joined the revolt and made frequent raids on the Nubas, but who were eventually repulsed. For five months they lived thus in the midst of alarms, and cut off from communication with the outer world, when, early in September, the Mahdi, having quitted Gedir, despatched a party under Mek Omar to take possession of Delen. The anxious party here determined upon flight to Fashoda, when Mek Omar made his appearance. Preparations for the flight were made, the fighting force consisting of eighty Remingtons belonging to the soldiers, in addition to the thirty rifles of the mission party, but, by the cowardice or unreadiness of the captain of the troops, when the appointed time came, at the dead of night, it was found that he had given no orders to his troops, that they were all asleep, and that the opportunity was gone. In the morning the soldiers went over to Mek Omar, and the mission party—two hundred in all, mostly women and children—were left alone, and on the fifteenth of September, 1882, were taken prisoners by the Mahdi's men. For three days they stayed on at Delen, and on the eighteenth set out for El Obeid, four animals being provided for the little party of Europeans, the Sisters riding, and Father Bonomi, Father Ohrwalder, and the two lay brethren taking it in turns to walk and ride. Whenever they reached a village they were treated with scorn and insults; they were constantly searched, in hopes that something of value might be found upon them, and had they not been carefully guarded by the escort they would have been killed. Thus they approached

El Obeid, which was being besieged by the Mahdi, the town itself having surrendered, while the garrison carried on a most obstinate defence. El Obeid was a large and prosperous town, with one hundred thousand inhabitants, and a large trade in grain, ostrich feathers, tamarinds, and skins of animals.

In one assault the Mahdi retired with a loss of ten thousand men, and had only Said Pasha had the pluck to pursue, he might have then and there completely routed the enemy; but more cautious counsels prevailed, and the garrison retained their quarters, and the Mahdi commenced a close blockade. It was during the siege that the little party arrived at El Obeid, having been robbed of everything they possessed by their escort just before they reached the Mahdi's camp. Arrived at the camp weak and ill, they made every effort to obtain their freedom; but the Mahdi's answer was always the same: "At present the roads are dangerous, and I wish no harm to come upon you; when El Obeid has surrendered, we will permit you to go to your own country."

Meanwhile, the garrison at El Obeid were in terrible straits; all articles of food fetched enormous prices, and then failed altogether; deaths by starvation reached an appalling number, gum being the only food. Then arrived news of reinforcements from Khartum; but nothing came of it, and on the nineteenth of January, 1883, the brave garrison were forced to surrender, and the original mission party in the Mahdi's camp was reinforced by those members of the mission at El Obeid who had survived the siege, and here they remained in most miserable plight, ill-treated and in danger of death, their only hope being fixed on Khartum; but until the twenty-first of June, 1883, they had no certain news. On that day a message reached them to the effect that they were not to lose heart, and that in the winter a large army would advance against the Mahdi. The army was that unfortunate body of troops commanded by General Hicks. The story of their defeat and massacre is too well known to be repeated here, but a quotation from the diary of an Austrian officer which fell into Father Ohrwalder's hands is worth reproducing. These are the last words of the diary, and show how hopeless the expedition was from the quality of the soldiers, who were apparently not fit for the work, though their European officers led them bravely

enough. "These are bad times; we are in a forest, and every one very depressed. The General orders the bands to play, hoping that the music may enliven us a little; but the bands soon stop, for the bullets are flying from all directions, and camels, mules, and men keep dropping down; we are all cramped together, so the bullets cannot fail to strike. We are faint and weary, and have no idea what to do. The General gives an order to halt and make a zareba. It is Sunday, and my dear brother's birthday. Would to Heaven that I could sit down and talk to him for an hour! The bullets are falling thicker. . ." This ends the diary, and surely makes an awful picture, fit prelude to the annihilation which followed.

It was on the ninth of November that the unfortunate captives received the news, and all their hopes were dashed to the ground. It was clear that the Government could not help them, and that Khartum must look to its own safety, for the Mahdi was master of almost the entire Sudan. But even now the hopes of the captives were raised once more by the news that Gordon Pasha had arrived in Khartum and been enthusiastically received; but the fact that Gordon was alone increased the Mahdi's courage, and he determined to advance on Khartum. It was then that the captives at last resolved to try and escape. They succeeded in procuring a guide and camels, when they were separated and handed over to different masters, and exposed to ill-treatment and insults from every side, until on the seventh of April, 1884, the Mahdi set out for Khartum. Father Ohrwalder was made over to another master, and with him went to Rahad. On the journey he had to walk and act as camel driver. "The burning sun and fatigue were terribly oppressive, and it is always a wonder to me how I escaped sunstroke. As for food, I had a share of my master's horses' food." The journey took three days, and Father Ohrwalder arrived with feet swollen and blistered by the burning sand. Here he was made over to a new master, and had several interviews with the Mahdi. All the time his existence was most miserable. His bed was the ground, and his roof the sky. Every morning he had to shake the scorpions out of his clothes; and he was unable to eat during the day, for, he says, he would have eaten as many flies as food. This went on till

towards the end of June, when he received letters from Khartum from the Austrian Consul.

"We hope that the English will energetically push forward into the Soudan, or we shall be lost. Our condition is desperate."

The date of this letter is January, 1884. This mention of troops from England lit another small ray of hope in the midst of the darkness of Father Ohrwalder's life. His condition at this time was indeed wretched. "The state of moral darkness in which we lived, the constant insults, being gazed upon by such multitudes, being at the mercy and sport of these savages, just as if I were a monkey or other curious animal, all had a dulling effect on one's spiritual nature, and I felt that I must be losing my mind; but yet in all these trials and afflictions God did not leave us. Again a ray of hope shone through the obscurity."

The next event in the history is the siege and fall of Khartum. This, being well known to all of us, may be left untold, except to point out that Father Ohrwalder lays great stress on the fact that Khartum, had it not been for treachery, could have held out for very much longer—the inhabitants were living almost luxuriously compared to the unfortunate garrison of El Obeid—and he further expresses his belief that had Gordon been accompanied by even a single company of British soldiers the moral effect would have been so great that such treachery could not have existed. The scenes of massacre and cruelty which were enacted after the capture of the town seem to have been indescribable, and that twenty-sixth of January, 1885, may well rank with the most awful days of bloodshed in the world's history. On the twenty-eighth the steamers were observed making their way up the Nile; the English had arrived, but quickly discovered they were too late, turned back, and disappeared. Thus the whole of the Sudan was in the power of the Mahdi, and the unfortunate captives had no prospect before them but captivity, till death—either from natural causes or at the hands of their masters—should put an end to their sufferings.

After the fall of Khartum the Mahdi gave himself up to a life of luxury, living on the fat of the land, while he, at the same time, urged moderation in eating and drinking in others. But this life did not suit him, and falling sick he became

dangerously ill, and on the twenty-second of June, 1885, he died. His death must have been a terrible shock to his followers, in whose eyes he was sacred and immortal, but, contrary to what might have been expected, no great split took place, and Khahfa Abdullah, who assumed the lead, was acknowledged as the Mahdi's successor without any trouble.

Father Ohrwalder's comments on what this man had done are not without interest as showing how all the troubles arose from him, and him alone. "Thus ended the Mahdi—a man who left behind him a hundred thousand murdered men, women, and children, hundreds of devastated towns and villages, poverty and famine. Upon his devoted head lies the curse of his people whom he had forced into a wild and fanatical war, which brought indescribable ruin upon the country, and which exposed his countrymen to the rule of a cruel tyrant, from whom it was impossible to free themselves."

With the death of the Mahdi our interest in the course of events in the Sudan naturally grows less, as the history of them afterwards is only one of petty frontier wars and internal squabbles which went to consolidate Abdullah's power. The only interest we have is to follow as closely as we can—for during this period Father Ohrwalder does not tell us as much as we should like about himself—the European captives.

When the Mahdi left Rahad, Ohrwalder was handed over to another master, Sherif Mahommed. He was at this time very ill, and had an attack of scurvy. Despite this he had to accompany his master to El Obeid, and a few days afterwards Father Bonomi was brought into El Obeid in chains, and lodged in the same tent as Ohrwalder, and it was here that they heard with despair of the death of Gordon and the fall of Khartum.

But Father Bonomi's day of delivery was fast approaching. It was on the fourth of June, 1885, that a man arrived, handing a note to Father Bonomi, and saying that a man had come to take him back to Dongola; but no mention was made of Father Ohrwalder. They went to the meeting-place arranged, and saw the man, who refused to take Ohrwalder, but promised to come back for him if he succeeded in getting Bonomi through. So there was nothing for Ohrwalder to do but to remain behind, and it must have been with a sad heart for himself that he

saw Bonomi start at dusk on the fifth of June, 1885. After a night of suspense lest Bonomi should be captured, he rose early and found no one, but he felt certain that Bonomi had been back. Six years afterwards he learnt that Bonomi had been unable to find the camels and guide, and had come back to find the man who had brought the note, that he might lead him to the guide. The escape was not discovered for four days, and then Ohrwalder said that the fugitive had gone to Khartum for some medicine. At El Obeid he was kept in the midst of disease and went through all the horrors of a revolt of blacks against the Dervishes, until the twenty-fifth of March, 1886, when he was permitted to go to Omdurman, and accordingly left El Obeid. "What a flood of recollections welled up in my mind as we marched for the last time through the desolate ruins of the city! How strange had been the vicissitudes of this once flourishing place during the last few years! From a thriving and peaceful townshp it had been transformed into the theatre of constant warfare and bloodshed. It had then been the scene of the Mahdi's debaucheries, when he had rested after his victories, and now it had dwindled down into a wretched village."

Omdurman was reached on the twenty-fourth of April, 1886, and they encamped close to the town. "A fearful sandstorm was blowing, and we were enveloped in clouds of dust—a fitting advent to the capital of the Mahdi's empire!" The next day they enter Omdurman, which seems to have become a centre of trade, the merchants being Greeks, Jews, and Syrians, who were doing a good trade, though coin was scarce and pieces of twilled cotton, manufactured in the Sudan, had been made currency.

From here to the end of the book Father Ohrwalder tells us hardly anything about himself, and we can only imagine from the slight glimpses we get what a wretched existence his must have been. In the course of his account of the Khalifa's attempt to invade Egypt, which ended in the victory of the Egyptians at Toski, he tells us that he often heard him say that if the English would only evacuate Egypt, he would very soon take possession of it. This victory also brought danger to the captives, for it seemed for a time quite possible that Abdullah would vent his anger on them, but the danger passed by as had so many others before. Then

a terrible famine fell upon Omdurman which swept off hundreds in its course, and then spread into the provinces, and still the captives lived on, keeping themselves as best they could, but although Ohrwalder gives us lifelike descriptions of life in the town, and accounts of the Khalifa's rule and exercise of justice, he still keeps himself in the background and his life is practically a blank until November, 1891, excepting that he tells us that the Sisters kept themselves by making clothes, while he, by himself, learnt the art of ribbon making.

The dresses of women in Omdurman were extensively ornamented with ribbons, and to make these ribbons Ohrwalder bought a small loom. But no one would teach him the art without the payment of much more than he could afford, so he carefully unravelled a piece of ribbon and studied the method of making it, and actually in that manner succeeded in his object, and made enough money to keep them alive. He tells us a little about his privations, but not much.

"For seven months we lived on dhurra bread and a few boiled vegetables, without oil, butter, or meat. Hard work and insufficient food were telling on our strength; however, we were far better off than hundreds of others, who were willing to work, but, finding nothing to do, were obliged to starve."

During all his long captivity thoughts of escape had never left the Father, and once in Omdurman he thought escape would prove easier, but although throughout the time he was there he tried to find a way, he always met with failure and disappointment. But in February, 1890, an Arab, Ahmed Hassan, came to him and asked him for a letter to his friends in Cairo. This Ohrwalder gave him, but it was not until the fifteenth of September, 1891, that Hassan set out from Cairo to Omdurman, the captives having given up all hope of him.

Meanwhile the condition of the captives had gone from worse to worse. Father Ohrwalder began to spit blood, felt severe pains in his chest, and was little more than skin and bone, while the Sisters were in even a worse plight. "The sad prospect of never regaining our liberty, of living a life of slavery, debarred from all the advantages and progress of the world, never again to worship in our grand churches, and enjoy the comforts of our holy religion; but to live and die amongst

the fiery rocks and sands of Omdurman, where the burning sun turned dead bodies into mummies—to die and be buried in slavery—the prospect of living was indeed unattractive, and what wonder we should long for death to free us from such misery!" On the fourth of October, 1891, one of the Sisters died, her body was carried from the town, and the few who were left returned to the town, longing for the time when they might be beside her. Surely a greater depth of misery and despair would be impossible to imagine.

But even now, when all seemed lost, help was near at hand. On the night of the twenty-eighth of October Hassan unexpectedly appeared. Ohrwalder took him to his tent. "After the usual Arabic greetings he said to him: 'Here I am; are you coming?'" Ohrwalder, seeing his release so near after so many disappointments, was for a moment speechless, but soon found tongue to enquire about the arrangements. The flight was to be made on camels, Hassan having been provided with one hundred pounds with which to purchase them—five in number. The camels were brought and preparation for the flight secretly made, the party not daring to trust any one, and the day gradually approached. "The day of our intended departure was approaching, and we looked forward to it with almost breathless impatience. We lost all appetite for food; fear, mental anguish, and the idea that we should be free, kept us in a perfect fever of excitement." On the twenty-seventh Ahmed came and appointed the next day for the attempt, and on that day Father Ohrwalder and the Sisters, stealing forth in the dusk, successfully made their escape from Omdurman. For three days they fled, without pursuit, and then the river had to be crossed, which, however, after some difficulty, was accomplished, and with wonderful good fortune, and hard riding, they journeyed on without visible pursuit or difficulty with the people whom they met. Their worst enemy was sleep. Try as they would, "the conversation would flag, and silence follow. The camels seemed to know their riders were asleep, and instinctively fell into a slower pace; the head kept nodding until it sunk upon the chest; with a sudden start, the equilibrium, which had been almost lost, would be recovered, and the sleep vanished." A trying flight for people strong and in good training, what must it have been for those

shrunk and emaciated by want and disease! But at last, on the seventh of December, the walls of the Egyptian fort at Murat were in sight, and the party who had gone through so much were in safety at last. For two days they rested, and then journeyed on gently to Cairo, which they reached on the twenty-first of December, 1891, eleven years after Father Ohrwalder had set forth from the city with such good hopes.

This for us ends this history of captivity and hardship, which it seems almost impossible for a man to have gone through, much less women. But it has the advantage of other romantic and seemingly impossible stories: it is true, and we can only recommend those who want to know more—and this is, of course, but a slight sketch—to read the book itself, and be interested and astonished.

"IN LOST PARK."

A WESTERN HOLIDAY.

IT was a very curious-looking procession that started off from our ranch one day the end of June. First of all, and the cause of the expedition, were about sixty head of cattle, which were going to be taken for summer pasturage into one of the mountain parks of the Foot Hills of the Rockies, for now that all the snow had disappeared, except that which remained, year in, year out, on the great peaks of the Snowy Range, and the mountain passes were open, we were about to economise our own pastures for winter use, by taking our outfit of inside cattle into the mountains; and intended to camp out in "Lost Park" for two or three months.

After the "cow brutes" came four pack-horses, laden with our small tent and necessities, such as hams, tied up in gunny-sacks, a large store of flour, and canned things, for up the Indian passes nothing in the way of wheels could get. Next in the cavalcade were our three riding horses, with our noble selves, the boys being most correctly attired à la cowboy, schapps, cartridge-belts, rifles—for they hoped for some sport—big hats and all.

I cannot say we looked very imposing, for the three horses were adorned with various useful, if not particularly ornamental, culinary articles, my poor Rorie having a frying-pan tied to his saddle, to say nothing of two gunny-sacks con-

taining loaves and soap; besides my comfort bed for sleeping in, which also answered the purpose of a trunk, rolled up lightly, and tied on to the Mexican saddle in two places with leather thongs, so as to make a nice rest for my back. We all used the saddles of the country, and most convenient we found them, whilst the many leather thongs stitched on to them at intervals were most useful for carrying things.

We set out on our long journey early in the morning, as it would be too hot to travel midday for any length of time, and it may be supposed that with the cattle our progress was but slow; the dogs gambolling round us in high glee. We had kept our destination a profound secret, as we had no wish, for the sake of our poor cattle who were but skin-poor after the severe winter, to share our camping-ground with anybody else's outfit; but we had determined to try for Lost Park; a mountain park which had but one opening into it, and was therefore, being difficult to hit, less of a favourite for a summer camping-ground than the better known ones. However, Jack had been there once before with a friend, and declared that he could find the place again, and we both of us believed thoroughly in Jack, and were prepared to follow him anywhere. As for me, I never said a word against any plan of the boys'; my only fear was lest they should think the life too rough for me and leave me behind, so I maintained a discreet silence and agreed to every word they said, meaning all the time to get my own way if I possibly could. It must not be thought that we were going to do anything out of the common—it was only what hundreds of ranch folk and their womenkind do every year of their lives, and think nothing of it—but I was a tenderfoot, and so afraid that the boys would think I could not manage it, and be a hindrance to them. I could ride, but I could not shoot one little bit, and it was not every brother out West who would put up with a girl on a mountain expedition who regarded a rattlesnake and a rifle with equal respect!

Lost Park itself was three days' journey, allowing for resting midday. We should have to camp out in the open that night, but we hoped to cross the Divide, and get as far as the Foot Hills, and make our camp by Bear Creek Canon, which we had to climb up the following morning; then, that night, we trusted to get into Berghum Park, where there was known to be a hunters' cabin, and plenty of water for

the "chores," as the inside cattle were not unfrequently called.

All that day we were in the saddle, from five in the morning till noon, when we rested by West Plum Creek, just over the Divide, and had a meal and sleep, and were on the road again by four o'clock. It was half-past seven when we camped for the night at the foot of Bear Canon, and lit our fire. We were very tired, cattle and all, but after a good wash in the creek, felt refreshed and quite ready for supper, which consisted of fried ham and tomatoes, bread and butter, and coffee. All our cows except one were dry, and the long journey having a bad effect on this poor creature, we had to take to canned milk, and got quite to like the flavour of it; indeed, I used to eat it on bread as long as the bread lasted. Supper and a smoke finished, we began to settle things for the night—the first night I had ever passed out of doors. The boys took the saddles off the horses and picketed them out not far from the fire, then they collected all the dry wood they could find by it, and lastly cut branches of scrub oak and pine, and put them at the head of each of our sleeping bags to lay our pillows on. The camp fire was built up high, its heart being composed of a great log of pitch-pine, which flared up brightly whenever fresh wood was thrown upon it; and as most of the wood was cedar, it may be supposed that the burning branches gave forth a very pleasant smell. We had our sleeping bags arranged with feet towards the fire, and then we all took off our boots and went to bed.

The boys, who had often slept in the open before, were asleep in a few moments, breathing very firmly and with great regularity; but for me it was a different matter; we had not had time to unpack our tent, and it took some days before I got into the knack of partially undressing inside a sleeping bag; for, of course, it was no rest if you went to sleep with all your clothes on.

In fact, I discarded one tight article of clothing for the trip, and merely took for overwear a blue serge shirt, and a couple of white silk blouses which I could wash out in the creeks; this, with a shady hat and gauntlet gloves, completed my exterior adornment. For the rest I wore my riding trousers, and Jäger underwear, and never suffered from a chill, though I was often wet to the skin. My habit

itself I found would have been sadly in the way, but I clung to the other portions of my riding attire, and found them as comfortable for climbing as for the saddle. I thought, tired as I really was, that I never should get to sleep that night, and envied the boys snoring away by my side, and only awaking to fling a fresh log on the fire; it was no novelty to them. All was very still and restful; there was little moon as yet, but the stars shone brightly overhead, the hills, and even the sleeping horses, taking strange and fantastic shapes in the indistinct light. A coyote howled from the plains below, a hawk or two would sometimes skim across the sky, and once, in the far distance, high up amongst the Foot Hills, I heard the shrill shriek of a mountain lion. I took out my watch; it was now two a.m. Miles and miles off in a country rectory they were awaking to a new day; and deep in reflection I must have fallen asleep, for when I awoke it was four o'clock and broad daylight. The boys were up and dressed, even their beds packed up, and they advised me to go and have my tub whilst they took the horses to water further down the creek.

"You will find a nice bathing-hole there," said Jack, pointing right ahead. "Be quick, there's a good girl; we want breakfast!"

So they departed, and I went to my green dressing-room, and once down its bosky banks, with the willows and cottonwoods meeting overhead, I was as much alone as in my own room at home, though I will own it took me a little time to realise the fact. The water was icy cold, running down as it always did from the mountains, and I had a lovely bath, and having finished my toilet, returned to find the ham frying and the coffee made, and quite ready we were for them, too. I am ashamed to think of all I ate on that expedition, quite as much as the boys, and the food was not always as varied as one could wish either.

By five o'clock we were in saddle and commencing our toilsome ascent up the Indian trail of the Canon. It was a climb, too; the cattle did not much like it, and after an hour the horses' scinges had to be loosed, and every three minutes they had to be turned sideways to get their breath. We were at such an altitude that it was quite painful to hear them panting. The trail, too, was a dreadful one; I know I often felt fairly frightened, though I would

not have said that I was not thoroughly enjoying it for worlds, and presently we came to a part where the track was composed of loose rolling stones and gravel, for about a quarter of a mile. Here the boys took the reins out of my hands and knotted them up, and told me that I must hold on to my saddle-horn as best I could. In vain did I beg to be taken off Rorie's back and allowed to walk; they only cruelly laughed, gave him a slap, and the brave little beast plunged on, and whenever we saw room enough to turn the ponies and give them a breather, we would bend over and touch their necks with the reins on whichever side there was room to turn. They understood the signal well enough, that being the way you turn them when cow-punching. You usually also speak their name encouragingly at the same time, saying, "Hoo-oo-oo, Rorie." That climb, we all thought, reflected great credit upon dear Rorie, but it took a great many "Hoo's" and encouraging words to get our whole cavalcade over the first spur of the Foot Hills, and down into Berghum Park, where we were to pass the night; and when ourselves and the packs were off they were streaming with heat, and their poor flanks heaving to such an extent that I thought they would certainly "go up."

"Looks as if they'd been 'locoed,'" said Jack, as we all turned to to rub them down a bit, and upon my asking what that meant he told me. Loco, it seemed, was a grass found sometimes on the prairie, which the horses eat with avidity once they come across it, and will touch nothing else. It has, however, very dangerous properties, for after feeding upon it the horses go off by themselves and mope, and have, moreover, wrong ideas of distance and size, and will lift their legs on walking over a small branch as if it were the trunk of a great tree; they fall into profuse sweats and walk round and round in circles, and in time it kills them; having much the same effect upon horses as opium has upon human beings. So pernicious is it that a good many dollars are offered for a pound of it in South Colorado. It is green all through the winter, and has a small pink blossom, but strangely enough, although it has been analysed, no trace of poison can be found, and it is thought that some insect that feeds upon it alone must contain the venom.

I listened to this tale of Jack's with great respect. It only seemed right and fitting that these wonderful prairies, stretch-

ing for hundreds of miles on either side, should contain herbs and grasses, the properties of which were unknown to us; indeed, I myself, after rain, had smelt a thousand aromatic perfumes arising from the grass at my feet, not one of which could be traced to a flower, and also found quantities of a herb resembling in taste and smell wormwood, which in England I had only found growing wild on the walls of an old Roman city in Hampshire.

Berghum Park, where we had camped, was a large plateau tucked away in the intercesses of the Foot Hills, and had been much thought of in time past as a winter resort for big game; hence the log shanty, which had been given up to me for the night. In the days when bear and elk had been plentiful there, the hunters had thought nothing of shutting themselves up in the different parks that abounded in the Foot Hills in the fall of the year. It was a lonely life, for with the big snows the passes were closed till the following spring, but they were repaid for the hardships of it by the pelts of the wild creatures that fell victims to their skill. But now increased civilisation had driven the big game further afield, and the shanty was only used as a shelter for cattle-men taking their "cow brutes" to summer pasture. It was of the oldest and roughest description, the furniture consisting of a frame bedstead and a rusty stove, and all around the walls were scribbled messages, written by the "boys" to any of their friends who might follow. One inscription was "from Ned to Dick," "Meet me in Perry Park," another: "We are all dog-gone tired." I sympathise deeply with that, and another, which it is to be hoped for his peace of mind, Mr. "Nat," whoever he might be, did not see: "You bet your bottom dollar, Nat's a galoot."

The park itself was good enough, plenty of grass for the cattle quite three feet high, a trout stream running through it, edged with the usual willow and cottonwood trees, wild flowers blooming everywhere, and air that was like drinking champagne, whilst there was plenty of small game to be got. But we were all too tired that night to think much of the beauties of nature, and after supper and a good wash tumbled off to bed. But in my case, alas! not to sleep. No sooner was the light gone, than countless insects awoke from their winter fast, and proceeded to make a meal off me. I struck a match; there they were in hundreds, crawling

out of the old logs, crawling out of the bedstead, crawling—ah me!—over my bedding. There was no help for it, although I had, tired as I was, taken the trouble to lay bits of cedar under the rugs; it was foolish, knowing how the wretched things abound in the old log houses, not to have slept in the open, but the treat of a room where one could really undress had been too much for me. So I vacated my state apartment, and awoke the boys, and we put all the bedding in the creek with big stones on it till the morning, and they gave up one of their bags to me, and I soon went to sleep. Otherwise I did not receive much sympathy, and the boys roared as they listened to my "tale of woe" next morning, but as they explained that the insects in question never troubled them, I forgave their laughter, for no one who has not experienced the small misery of being tortured by these repulsive brutes can understand what it really is.

We were up betimes in the morning to dry the bedding, but owing to the fact that the full warmth of the sun did not reach us, tucked inside the mountains as we were, till half an hour after he arose, it was five o'clock before we started. This time, too, it was not such straightforward travelling, for the trail led up in zigzag fashion along the spur of the next hill. Up and up we went, till we got at last amongst the dead timber, and here and there, growing out of the great bare boulders, grew brilliant patches of the bright blue gentian; and green fronds of a sort of mountain maiden-hair peeped out. I wanted very much to stop and gather some, but the boys would not hear of resting yet; indeed, Jack was looking anxiously about, and he said afterwards he was afraid he had lost his way. The sun, too, was gaining in power, and the tongues of the poor animals were hanging out with heat, and their sides heaving with the exertion. At last, far ahead it seemed, where the trail ended, rose a solid wall of bare rock, quite six feet high, and I called out that there was no more path—we would have to retrace our steps. I was so tired, too, and ready, but for very shame, to cry at the idea.

But I was mistaken, mercifully, and we were now at the very summit of the mountain, and through what seemed solid rock there was really a track, along which we wound, Indian file. There were high walls of rock on each side of us, and the sun was right overhead. It was fearfully

hot, not a breath of air to be felt; the poor cattle began to feel the oppression of the atmosphere, and to moan piteously. As for me, I did not care—it seemed as if we had been years and years in this stony desert—till I heard the boys say triumphantly, "There, what do you think of that?" And I felt a cool breath of air blow upon my face, and looked up and found that our rocky road was gone, and that we stood on the other side of the mountain ready to begin our downward climb. Above us, as we looked up, the snowy peaks reared their heads into the sky, looking almost as if we might put out our riding-whips and touch them, and below was a great mass of misty cloud that hid all else.

"There—there is Lost Park," cried the boys, pointing downwards, and one congratulated the other upon being first on the feeding-ground, for not the print of a single hoof had been noticed up the trail.

"Nothing but mountain and cloud," I said despairingly. "There is no room for us down there; why, I could hit Pike's Peak with a stone."

"The effect of the rarity of the air," said Jack very contentedly. "Plenty of room down there;" and he lifted me off my saddle; then they gave a prolonged "Hoo-oo-oo!" and raised their black snakes; and we three human beings stood alone—horses, cattle, and all had disappeared in the white mist; and we could hear the clattering of their hoofs amongst the loose stones.

"They will get on better without us," the boys explained, "as it's a tiny bit steep. So now, old girl, you must put in a bit of a scramble."

Certainly their ideas of a bit of a scramble were liberal ones; I don't know how we got to the bottom, but once through the cloud we saw, stretched before us, what looked like the very garden of Eden to my tired eyes, for down below lay a lovely green park, with trees waving in the breeze, and a cool stream meandering through it, gleaming in the sunlight; and the horses—oh, happy creatures!—already with their noses dipped into the water. Then all seemed easy and pleasant, with one of the boys holding my hand, and the other holding me up by the waistbelt, we plunged on, regardless of scratches in dress and hands, and gashes on one's strongest pair of boots; till we, too, like the cattle, were drinking our fill, and washing our faces, too exhausted even to explore our summer

residence. The boys had just energy enough left to take the packs and saddles off, and then, too tired for food, we lay down and slept for a couple of hours straight off.

We pitched our little tent close to the stream and chanced its booming. Something or the other always has to be chanced in a summer camp, and the fact that gave me the greatest happiness was that there was no fear of rattlesnakes in the Foot Hills, and that I could stroll about and gather flowers and berries without any fear of my natural enemy.

By supper-time we were nicely fixed up, had a good fire built, and some delicious mountain trout—which abounded so that one could catch sufficient for breakfast by wading in before one's bath—broiling in steaks on the top of the fire; and there I set to work to make flap-jacks; our future bread, all our loaves having given out. For the first week of them we thought we had never eaten anything so good, then we loathed them for a fortnight, and then endured them, for we had mountain appetites. After a while, too, I got quite clever at baking biscuits in a big iron pot, which made a nice change. As for the many birds the boys shot, why, I cooked them by a gipsy receipt I remembered reading of—rolled them in a thick mud paste, feathers, insides and all, and baked them under the ashes. It answered capitally. The bird came out of its mud shell, which was baked to a potsherd, perfectly cooked, with all its juices in, and the feathers and other débris remained in the coating of mud. Space presses, or I would like to give an account of the many mountain fruits, of our astonishment at finding the currants bigger than the gooseberries, and of the deliciously flavoured raspberries which grew in profusion all up the mountain-side, and of the bear and elk hunts the boys came in for.

We had the park all to our own outfit, too, all the time, bar the ghost of a murdered Indian, whose happy hunting-ground it had been; which was supposed to keep watch and ward, together with the spook of his murderer, who was punished for his crime by never being allowed to find his way out of the place; hence its name of Lost Park. But of this I can only speak from hearsay; we never were favoured with a sight of them. More fortunate than the hunter, however, we went out of the park in September brown and well, tea,

sugar, and candleless; but as far as looks went, different creatures, both the cattle and ourselves; the former, much to the joy of the boys, who wanted to trade some of them for Creede City lots, that town—now, alas, nearly washed away through the bursting of a cloud—being on the boom for gold.

For ourselves the mountain air and change of diet had done wonders. My cough had quite gone, and the boys had fattened nicely and felt, as they said themselves, very "fit." The poor horses were almost too fat to manage the homeward climb, indeed it was all they could do to carry the few things we had remaining. But the cattle outfits were the envy of every one who saw them, whilst the ten empty lard pails were full of mountain berries, to be made into jam for winter use, and the boys had proudly tied on to a saddle the skin of a gentleman, Bruin by name, who had given me a great fright by wishing to dispute the gathering of the berries.

WINTER SKETCHES IN NORWAY.

IN TWO PARTS. PART I.

"It will be cold," said the Captain of the Hull boat when we asked him, in the smoking-room of his steamer, about the weather on the Norwegian mountains in January. "It will be about as cold as you'll like it."

"But," protested my friend, "there is a great deal of exaggeration on the subject—at least, so I have been given to understand."

"Exaggeration, eh! They talk of the Gulf Stream, I suppose, sir, don't they? A rare sort of hot water arrangement that, for the inland parts of Norway! Why, bless my life, three weeks ago, what do you think happened to me on the way up to Trondhjem in this very boat? It never happened before, I will say that."

"What?" we both exclaimed, eager to hear yet another yarn from the teeming memory of this seasoned mariner. I suppose we smiled a little as we spoke, for certainly some of his narratives had been a trifle exacting.

"It is a true tale," said the Captain, twirling his moustache furiously.

"Of course it is—whatever it may be," I replied with promptitude. "But let us hear it."

"Oh, there's little enough of it. I was asleep in my cabin, you know, and as I

could trust my mate, I had undressed. Well, I woke, don't you know, and tried to hitch over on to the other side, but I couldn't do it. Why couldn't I do it, gentlemen? Because my nightshirt, gentlemen, was frozen fast to the side of my bunk. The moisture of my body had gone to ice. I had to tear myself free, just like ripping a paper bag!"

"Phew! And that in the face of the Gulf Stream?"

"Quite so. But come out on deck now. We are getting near some ticklish parts, I assure you."

We were the only cabin passengers, my friend and I. It was natural, therefore, that the Captain should treat us with more than common civility. He took us up to his particular perch on the quarterdeck, and showed us the glories of the Norwegian coast by winter starlight.

Now this is a pleasure that few visitors to Norway experience. In summer the nights are so trivial that they are little better than twilight. People do not know when to go to bed during the northern tourist season. Like northern vegetation, they then feel disposed to live at twice the rate of ordinary animated beings more to the south, and of course, the further they go to the north the less real are the nights.

"You are very fortunate," said the Captain, as we all three leaned against the iron railings, and looked at the wonderful scene. We were in a strait of star-illuminated still water, with mountains on either hand snow-clad to the base. The great shapes of the hills shone in the water like silvery shadows. The beams of the stars ran in long lines elsewhere in the tranquil pool—as it seemed to us. We made our way almost without a sound. There was neither current nor wave to oppose us in the least. The muffled throb of the boat's engine was well-nigh imperceptible as we leaned over the iced railings, and said all the complimentary things about the Norwegian winter that we could imagine.

High above us on one hand—terribly high it seemed to us—was a broad, intense white seam. This was a glacier of eternal snow, fathoms deep. In all the prospect we could see but one little twinkling yellow light—very different from that of the stars—betokening human habitation. It was hard, in this romantic mood, to think reasonably of the lives led by these isolated fisher-folk, hemmed in among the Norwegian waters by the huge mountain

shapes, which in winter were likely to be quite unscalable. The sparkle of the stars was singularly variegated; you could distinguish the colours of blue, pale green, radiant white, and daffodil yellow among them. It would not have interested me vastly to have heard a professor descendant upon the metallic origin of these colours. I preferred to take them as they seemed—an infinity of rainbow-hued lamps pendent over our heads, providentially arranged to help us on our way to Bergen. They reminded me oddly of the illuminations at the last Paris Exhibition. It is a bald comparison, yet not so untrue as it may appear.

At the channel our Captain wished us to see, a gust of freezing wind blew down upon us from a rift in the mountains. We drew our coat collars tight to our ears, and watched. The snow-clad hills to the left parted and showed us a long silvery reach of water to the south-west. Beyond was the Atlantic. The ocean swell rose and fell methodically, unbroken. In the distance, also on the seaward side of us, was another island. For a few minutes we rolled gently. It was the motion of a gondola rather than of an ill-dispositioned ship. Then the faint light of a beacon house drew near, and soon the old conditions were again upon us—the placid water, sown with star-reflections, and the snow-covered mountains hanging over us to the right and left.

Had we been young ladies in the heyday of sentimentality we should, no doubt, have thought the steward a brutal Goth to ring the supper bell just when our rapture was at its keenest. But so did not we, for the icy air had given us better appetites than we had brought on board with us at Hull, and our constant exercise up and down the deck, with icicles dangling from our moustaches, had also done much to make the sound of the meal bell dear to us.

Five or six hours later we parted with our good Captain regretfully. Bergen received us without enthusiasm. A solitary brace of Northmen were on the pier-head to which the steamer had to be cabled. They were not eager to do anything for us—it did not seem the season for travellers, they said. Silly fellows; later, when we talked with patriotic Norwegians on the subject, they took quite the opposite view. "Ah, you do well," they said, "to come to us in winter. It is our best time. In summer it is hot, and we have to work all day and into the night also. But now,

when all is white, and there is not much to do except enjoy ourselves—this is Norway's real holiday time."

Between ourselves, dear reader, the Norwegian's idea of enjoyment is rather a sober one. He is not a demonstrative person. If he is happy, he conceals the fact. Verily, and indeed, I believe it is only to be guessed by the quantity of food he eats and of the beer that he drinks. As this conjecture has been confirmed to me by a native of the land, without a particle of shame in the avowal, I do not so much mind declaring it.

There was one other traveller in the hotel—a gentleman in the concert hall comic line, who had a fortnight's engagement at a Bergen place of entertainment. He was a pleasant young Swede, and told us that Norway is not a country for an artist to make money in. His photographs of himself, as Bismarck, a peasant of Dalecarlia, a Parliament man, a French soldier, and—the rascal!—an English "mees," were sufficiently diverting. He had a very flexible mouth—that was the secret of his gift of impersonation.

Four buxom Norwegian chambermaids looked after us in our hotel, and manifold were the sandwiches they set by the embroidered pillows of our beds when we came in late, after the dining-room stove had died to extinction. From our window—with patent "escape from fire" ropes at the side—we looked at the fine Floiefjeld hill, which does its best to shelter Bergen to the north. The sun shone on the snow of this hill—at a very late hour in the morning—with beautiful effect the next day.

It was Sunday, and a great procession of blue-eyed womenfolk in black silk head-gear and goloshes passed before our window towards the church. Anon we joined them and entered the building. The air outside was, for Bergen, they told us, surprisingly keen. Inside the church it was warm as a toast. The service was not engrossing, either to us or to the native worshippers. The latter came and went, and seemed to be concerned while in the building chiefly in blowing their noses and smoothing their hair. Still, the Scandinavian ruff to the minister's neck is perennially quaint. It was better to see than the whitewashed walls, the spittoons, and the painted wooden effigy of I know not what Christian symbol by the towering wooden pulpit. In Scandinavia they call their daisies "pastor's ruffs," and it is a very good name for them.

One thing must not be forgotten—the great Christmas fir-tree set in a box in the middle of the church. Yuletide was past, but its festival was still in swing. Wherever we went we saw Christmas-trees ornamented with tinselled trifles, biscuits and sweets, and coloured balls. Norway seemed to owe much of its winter's brightness to them.

Outside the church, and a common adornment of every Norwegian farmhouse, is to be seen a pole with a sheaf of corn tied to the summit. In the towns people tie the sheaves to their window-sills. This takes place when the first autumnal snow falls. Of course, throughout the winter the supply is constantly increased. The Norwegian birds must feel well-disposed towards the Northmen. They show it by the fearless way in which they delve in the snow at your very feet for unconventional provender.

Like the Lutherans elsewhere, the Norwegians enjoy themselves heartily on Sunday afternoon and evening. We climbed the Floiefjeld with a hundred or two of the members of Bergen's "beau monde." There was a deal of adult snow-balling on the way up and down, and more laughter than we heard anywhere else in Norway. This was explainable by the fact that Bergen contains many Germans, who excel the Norwegians in vivacity.

From the top of the hill we looked down upon Bergen's fog, which was bad enough for London town when viewed from the pure heights, with unblemished snow a yard deep all about us and a cloudless blue sky overhead. There is a restaurant on the hill, wherein, on festivals, it is seemly to drink port wine or punch, especially if you are accompanied by lady friends.

But there was little time for dalliance here. The sun seemed to show himself only as a matter of form and to sink behind the hills again almost immediately. Then the cold wind blew keen. Later in the evening snow fell, and the ladies who went to the theatre swathed themselves in woollens. As for my friend and I, we played whist with a gentleman of the ruff-bearing order and another. It would have been indecorous in England thus to sit down to a rubber—with plenty of punch hot close at hand. But the traveller almost of necessity becomes cosmopolitan in his habits. Besides, had we not as an accomplice a Christian minister? As a matter of fact, it was this gentleman who most wished for the game.

Now we had come to Norway primarily to skate; but it was out of the question. Wherever there was ice there was snow, and a great deal of it. Norway is a land for snow-shoeing—skating is a secondary sport with the Norwegians.

We learnt this thoroughly when we set out for our journey to the south. The lakes were fast bound in ice, and had not an inch of their surfaces disclosed. They were an impressive but rather disheartening spectacle; for it was gall and wormwood to think how merrily we could have gone on our way if an army of sweepers had aided us.

As it was, instead of skating we had to sleigh. For this purpose it behoved us to get fur coats and much else. We went to the furriers' and saw piles of the skins of bear, fox, lynx, sable, mink, otter, and wolf. For ten pounds we could have bought a ducal bear-skin paletot, and a white wolf-skin coat was worth about as much. Wild beasts are getting scarce in Norway nowadays, and very scarce in Sweden, where about a score of bears annually are all that the peasants can get at. But in this warehouse there was no suggestion of such scarcity.

We returned to the hotel, swollen about three-fold, and majestic in mink-skin raiment to our very heels. Also we had top-boots of a leviathan size, adapted to be padded with hay or straw, and to wear over an ordinary pair of boots. With these, sealskin caps to draw to the ears, and gauntlet fur gloves, we were in a condition to challenge even the North Pole to do its worst—at least, so we fancied.

In the face of these unmistakable preparations, it seemed much too bad of the weather to break up suddenly on the Monday night. The streets were then in a vile state, and the rain descended straight and abundantly. We went to the theatre to see a poor little play in a poor little building—hardly any one laughed, although it was a comedy!—and afterwards we retired to our embroidered pillows somewhat out of humour.

But we were told to have patience, and to get out of Bergen and the influence of the Gulf Stream as quickly as possible. This, then, we did on the Tuesday morning, in the midst of a furious storm from the south-west. I thought the wind would blow the little train off the line, and certainly the rain that came with it made the icicles on the mountain-sides look rather belated. The lakes near

Bergen had by no means a winsome appearance under these conditions.

However, we kept up our hopes, and in five hours were rewarded. By that time we had run to the terminus of the Bergen railway, and were about fifty miles inland, by the Lake of Voss. The sky was a cold blue over us, and the snow made our mouths water with delight; it was in the best of conditions for sledging. The postman at the Voss Station—wrapped in furs like a lord, and with a revolver at his waist—told us, with an ironical shrug of the shoulder, that there was quite enough hard snow his way.

Voss looked lovely, with its little gabled wooden chalets deep in snow. Dogs were running about and barking in the snow, and the village children were amusing themselves by shooting down the slopes of the surrounding hills on snowshoes. At the hotel they were agreeably astonished to see us, and only lamented that the weather was so suitable for our progress that they could not conscientiously attempt to detain us.

Norway is not a country famous for its architecture or works of art. That is rather a relief upon the whole. At any rate it gave neither of us a pretext for tarrying in out-of-the-way villages in the course of our journey. Nor, in winter, is it a land for a slow, piecemeal enjoyment of Nature's wonders. You must look about you briskly from the thoroughfares and be satisfied with that. The man who thinks at such a time to climb mountains and get at out-of-the-way waterfalls, might just as well arrange for his funeral off hand. There are an indefinite number of feet of snow on the mountain-sides, and underneath the snow the rocks are mantled with glossy ice, upon which safe foothold is impossible.

We were quite content with our sledges when they came to the hotel door, each drawn by a sturdy little yellow pony, and each with a broad-shouldered lad to ride on the small seat behind. We passengers were telescoped along the middle in an easy attitude, with bear-skins and rugs round our legs and knees. Thus we started, in the presence of half-a-dozen Voss lads, who seemed considerably impressed by the whispered intimation of the hotel waiter that we were bound for Christiania.

Well, the journey took us six days, including one entire night also, and not a few hours which we stole from other nights,

tempted by the majesty of the moon on the snow-clad mountains and the dark pine forests heavily weighted with snow.

Our first day was the longest of all, seeing that it began at about six o'clock in the morning—in pitchy darkness—and ended, I suppose, at midnight, when we might have been seen strutting up and down the tiny pier of Gudvangen on the magnificent Naero fiord, out of the greater fiord of Sogne. We were then waiting for the mail steamer—a toy vessel about twenty feet long—which was to convey us up the fiord to Laerdalsören. The steamer was hours late, so that we did not get to bed until past five o'clock the following morning. Thus we were in movement very nearly twenty-three hours out of the four-and-twenty.

What memorable sights had we not seen in the interval! The mountains over Gudvangen are reckoned about the grandest anywhere in Norway. We saw them in the starlight. It seems a pity, but I assure you the spectacle even thus was worth viewing. The huge peaks almost hung over us in their precipitousness, and the starlight glittered on the long icicles which clothed their sides. In the summer visitors admire the waterfalls hereabouts. With us they were transformed into prodigious fringes of solid ice.

We had seen the sun set over the mountains behind us, while flying along at a rate of about eight miles an hour. The great white shapes took a faint coral colour, held it for a few minutes, and then became cold white again. The sky was shot with pink and purple clouds for about as long. Afterwards we tightened our fur coats round us and prepared for an arctic hour or two.

And what is more, we had it. The cold was intense in the valleys this night. If we kept our mouths shut for but a minute the icicles had pinned our moustaches to the lower part of the face, and it cost us a real painful wrench to break them. On we drove through the cold, with vast snow-clad lakes one after the other by our side, or through the midst of silent forests, beautifully clothed in snow. Though we were snug enough in all the covered parts of the body, somehow this our first day did not quite agree with us. We granted that it was a superb experience; but it made us quite laughably irritable at the station-houses where we paused to get fresh horses and to solace ourselves with hot coffee and

cigarettes. We made one long stay for dinner, when our irritability thawed completely away. But afterwards, when we faced the bitter night again, it again descended upon us. However, by this time we were in the secret, and we did not take umbrage at the manifest tokens by which it declared itself.

Our landlord at the hotel where we slept, after our opening day, whistled when we told him we were going all the way to the capital. But immediately afterwards he looked at our fur coats and seven-league boots.

"Oh, it might not be so bad for you," he said, with a laugh. "You must eat plenty, and you will do."

We had already been warned in Bergen that we ought to drink plenty of spirits—a silly notion. But it was just as well that we took a bottle of cognac with us, for the liquor laws of Scandinavia are tiresome to the stranger. After a long day we asked in vain at our inn for brandy or whisky. They were not licensed to sell such beverages, and they offered us beer instead.

Of other luxuries there was also an absolute dearth in the wayside inns. We had an idea before we started that reindeer was a palatable sort of meat. It did not prove so with us, and yet we could get no other for two days while we were in the uplands, moving ever between mountain tops and along a valley white in every part. They did not serve it in an appetising manner, and seemed to cook it in its own fat, which we were told afterwards was by no means right, since the fat of reindeer is objectionable, even in itself. Still, it kept us alive, and we contrived to get some enjoyment by the way, if only in the interesting variety of post-boys, who helped us from stage to stage.

Of white bread we saw none while we were fed on the reindeer. In the north of the land the honeymoon is called "Hvedebrød dagen," or, "white bread days." We could hardly, therefore, expect this indulgence in winter. In summer, of course, it may well be otherwise, for then visitors are to be seen rattling across the land wherever there is a decent driving road, and their wants have to be attended to.

We did not lose either our ears or our noses. This was no inconsiderable mercy, seeing that both of us carried noses of uncommon dimensions, nor did the cold make us lose our tempers inordinately after the first day or two. We laughed at the mean sort of sledges we had to put up with

in the wilds; at the smoky and unclean interiors of some of the smaller station-houses; at the tough reindeer collops; at our blue noses and the icicles that hung from them; and even at the overturns in the snow which we had to endure in the worst part of the valley.

If we learnt nothing else by this journey, we acquired a respect for the wisdom and intrepidity of the average Norwegian pony that will last long. I wonder how an English horse would have comforted himself when chest-deep in snow—as were our little fellows over and over again. They might very excusably have pitched us neck and crop over precipices more than once or twice. But if they could not help upsetting us—and our luggage—they seemed bent on doing it with the utmost consideration. At times we floundered badly in trying to right ourselves and recover our packages in the drifts. Yet all went well in the end, and on the seventh day, we reached the capital without having lost a single article by the way.

We had the luck in the highest part of the valley—nearly four thousand feet above the sea—to notice a couple of lemmings: those interesting little Norwegian rodents about which so much has been written. One of them stood piteously on its hind paws when I bent down to take it up, and it nipped me smartly with its pretty white teeth for my pains. The poor little fellows were clearly hard up for food. The snow here was tremendous in quantity, and we rode at times over more than twenty feet of it. If the frozen surface had let us through, we should have been in a fine pickle.

The lemmings, like the weasels in Scotland, sometimes march through the land in multitudes, going across water and up mountains with no deviation, and, of course, eating whatever they fancy by the way. The fish take toll of them when they cross the streams, and the reindeer disembowels them with its hoofs on the fjelds. One would be sorry to hear they were extinct—which, however, they are little likely to become.

This lemming day in our tour was the most trying of all. When we had got to the end of it, we were on the downward grade, with Christiania about one hundred and fifty miles away at the sea level. We had got our backs to the cold north, and hoped we had done with piercing snow-storms in our faces, and a thermometer down to zero.

FOR ANGELE'S SAKE.

A STORY IN THREE PARTS.

PART II.

"THE other monsieur has been down this two hours or more," said Angèle, as she brought me my coffee at eight o'clock the next morning. "He was at the door when I arrived this morning. He had been for a turn in the forest with the père Rochat, and now he is in the atelier with Franz. He has been praising Franz's work up to the skies. I heard him say he has never seen better wood-carving. For my own part, I think my cousin Jacques Méris is quite as clever. Monsieur Eustace must see Jacques' work. He will probably give him an order, as he has given Franz. He is very rich, is he not, your cousin? Much richer than you, Monsieur Jean? How is it, if you are cousins?"

I explained to her that he was rich and that I was poor because he was the head of the family, and the owner of the family property.

"It is droll," she replied; "here we all share, and I wonder, since Monsieur Eustace seems so generous, that he does not share it with you."

I laughed.

"You do not like him, Monsieur Jean?" she said.

"Why do you suppose that?" I asked.

"I do not suppose it, I know it; I saw it last evening when you met. Yet to look at Monsieur Eustace I should have thought every one would like him. Ah! he is very handsome, and so 'comme il faut.' Why do you not like him, Monsieur Jean?"

"Don't ask foolish questions, Angèle," I replied. "And there is madame calling you."

"Of course she calls me," cried the girl petulantly; "her one thought is to make me work."

After my breakfast I strolled into the atelier. There stood Eustace, as much at home as if he had been born and brought up among Swiss wood-carvers. He had a piece of charcoal in his hand, with which he was rapidly sketching a plan on a large sheet of paper. Franz stood beside him watching, and listening with rapt admiration to his explanations.

"Jack," cried my cousin, as I entered, "what an old dunce you are. You never mentioned in your letters home—Rachel

showed them to me, you know—what a genius inhabited this retired nook. The finding of him is the reward of my magnanimity in my coming to seek you. I am going to get him to do me a whole lot of carving—a cabinet, and some panels, and a chair. I think I've made a great revision of my plans. I shall put off my mountaineering for a while, and I have persuaded the forester to take me 'en pension' for a week or two. I have dabbled in wood-carving myself, and I shall get some real good tips from our friend here."

Franz could hardly wait till this long speech, of which he understood the purport, was finished.

"Ab, Monsieur Jean," he broke in, "I owe all this to you. Monsieur has been looking at my work. He is a real connoisseur. He has given me an order which will occupy me for weeks. It is work which there will be some satisfaction in carrying out, and it will go to London, and who knows what it may not be the beginning of? Besides which, monsieur wants me to give him some lessons in carving, and he offers me a price which I am almost ashamed to accept. It is too liberal. I will go down to the sawmill at once, monsieur," he went on, turning to Eustace. "Méris always keeps some well-seasoned wood on hand, and as he is Angèle's father I——"

He nodded his head, took up his cap, and went out; but before he started for the sawmill we saw him deep in conversation with Angèle, who was shelling peas at the back door.

"That's a most capable young flirt," said Eustace, looking towards them.

"She isn't flirting with Franz, anyway," I replied.

"Isn't she?" he returned drily.

"No," I said; "they are an engaged couple."

"Well, the one thing doesn't put the other out of the question," he said. "She couldn't help flirting if she had to die for it."

"You have not been long in coming to that conclusion," I replied.

"I was not more than ten seconds," he answered carelessly, "and I said to myself at the same time, 'I'll bet any money my humdrum old cousin has let all her little wiles and smiles pass unnoticed.'"

"Ferrier," I exclaimed, "don't talk of the girl in that way. If Franz heard you——"

"But he doesn't hear me," interrupted

Eustace, "and if he did, doesn't he admire her for what she is?"

All that day, and for several days to come, nothing was talked of at La Gaulette but the great good fortune that had fallen to Franz. The neighbours of the scattered forest hamlet heard of it and came to congratulate him, and to stare in wonder at the magnificent sketches which the rich English stranger had given him. Some of them shook their heads.

"I wonder he ventures to begin such a task," they said. "Look at the expense it will be to him for wood if he happens to spoil a panel."

"Spoil a panel," retorted Madame Rochat. "Franz is not that sort. He is too careful; besides, he has a real talent. You will see how he will succeed, and doubtless this order will lead on to another, and he will reach an excellent position—equal to that he has abandoned—and he will be raised above the necessity of doing trivial work for the shops in Lausanne and Montreux."

The forester, too, was sanguine about the future which was opening before his kinsman, while as to Franz, he worked hard from morning till night, in ecstasy at the opportunity of exercising his artistic fancy and building castles in the air, as the groups of leaves and flowers gradually emerged under his skilful touch from the great slabs of wood.

"I shall give Angèle a far handsomer 'corbeille' than I ever dreamt of," he told me; "and the very next time I go to Lausanne I will buy her the silver buckle she has set her heart on. She has so few pretty things, poor child. And we shall be able to have a couple of cows, perhaps, when we are married, instead of the goat we had talked of. As to my English lessons, Monsieur Jean, we must let those rest, for what with giving Monsieur Eustace instruction in carving, and with my own work, I have scarcely time to eat my meals."

But Eustace's enthusiasm as a learner did not last very long. Each day he spent less and less time in the atelier. He wanted to explore the forest thoroughly, he said, and besides, he saw how it hampered Franz to have him pottering about.

"I wish he did not think that," Franz said to me. "It is in reality a pleasure to teach him. He knows so much of our mountains, and he talks to me of them; and he gives me no trouble, he overcomes difficulties almost without an effort."

"He has made a conquest of you, Franz," I said laughing, for the honest fellow spoke quite enthusiastically of Eustace.

"I think he has," replied Franz gravely; "there is something about him which I cannot describe, which it seems to me must make every one like him; and yet, Monsieur Jean," here Franz hesitated, "have you not remarked—or perhaps you would not notice it as I do—Angèle does not seem to like him."

"Why do you think that, Franz?" I asked.

"Well," he replied, lowering his voice, "at first she liked him well enough. She said he was gayer and more friendly than—than you, Monsieur Jean. But now it is quite different. When I speak of him she changes the subject, and when he speaks to her—ever so courteously as his manner is—she only shrugs her shoulders or pouts. Sometimes I have felt quite ashamed for her, but if I mention it she will not hear a word. For myself, I find no fault in him, except that he might stick to his work—I mean to carving—a little more."

The same evening when supper-time came, Eustace had not come in. Madame Rochat grew fidgety for the chickens she had roasted, and like many another careful housewife, she vented her incipient irritation on the most convenient object.

"Hast thou nothing better to do than to stare down the road," she said to Angèle, who stood in the doorway. "No one ever came home the faster for being watched for."

"I'm not watching for him," retorted the girl, wheeling round. "Why do you say I am watching for him?"

"Hoity toity," cried Madame Rochat, not sorry for the diversion, "mayn't a body speak without putting you into a rage?"

Then, to my surprise, Angèle, instead of answering, burst into tears.

"For shame of yourself," went on Madame Rochat, "one would think you were a baby of six years old, instead of a woman on the point of being married. 'Tis a mercy Franz has the temper of an angel."

"Do not speak to me of my marriage," blazed forth the girl afresh; "you know you would be only too glad if it came to nothing."

I felt sadly in the way in my position as spectator of a family quarrel. Just at that

moment Eustace appeared, full of apologies for his want of punctuality.

"Go and bring in the soup, Angèle," said Madame Rochat, "and tell Franz we are going to table."

"Why, Angèle," cried Eustace, as she went across the room, "what is this? you are all in tears. Have you and Franz had a quarrel? What is it all about?"

"You know what it is all about," she said; "why do you ask?"

Eustace looked from one to another with a half amused smile.

"I see," he said, as Angèle went into the kitchen. "I have engrossed too much of the fiancé's time lately, and once or twice she has come and overheard us talking of those mountains of which she is so jealous."

"I am not jealous of the mountains," interrupted Angèle, re-entering from the kitchen, "he may go back to his guides if he likes. I don't care."

She looked defiantly at Madame Rochat as she spoke. Eustace laughed. She turned to him angrily as if she were going to say something further, then setting the soup tureen on the table, she rushed out of the room, and we saw her no more that evening.

That stormy scene seemed to have cleared the atmosphere; the following evening every one was in excellent good humour, and Angèle was quite gentle and meek.

"I have made my peace with her," said Eustace to me as we smoked, "but it was not a very easy matter. The grudge was rooted deeper than I thought."

"And what was the grudge?" I asked.

"Just what I thought," he replied carelessly.

The next day was Sunday. Eustace announced his intention of going to service at the forest church at Montherond, and I went and stretched myself with a book under the great beech-tree in front of the house. Presently I saw Madame Rochat coming toward me, a look of embarrassment on her face.

"Monsieur Jean," she began, "I can speak to you with more ease than I can to your cousin, and what I have to say is a little difficult. We know how rich and generous he is, but still I would rather he did not make such costly presents to any one of our household. I have just seen Angèle on her way to church, she had on a beautiful silver buckle. I asked her how she came by it, for I know Franz had

not yet bought the one he spoke of. At first she would not say, but at last she told me that Monsieur Eustace had given it to her. I felt very much surprised. I do not think she should accept such a beautiful present from any one but Franz. I do not mean," she went on dubiously, "that I think Monsieur Eustace meant anything; but, Monsieur Jean, if you could explain to him that we have other ways here in the forest, perhaps he would not do such a thing again."

"You are quite right, madame," I said. "I will do as you wish me."

But when I talked the matter over with Eustace he only laughed.

"Why, that was my peace-offering," he said, "and the little goose was so proud of it she was obliged to parade it on the very first opportunity."

Somehow or other he made it all right with Madame Rochat, so that her scruples vanished, or at least she did not mention them again. As to Franz, he was almost as proud of the buckle as Angèle herself.

"I shall get her a chain to wear with it," he said, "and we will call the buckle Monsieur Eustace's 'cadeau de nocces.'"

In the course of that week I left La Gaulette. The leave-taking was very affectionate all round. Madame Rochat asked my permission to embrace me. I had reminded her so often of her absent son, she said. The forester gave me a handshake which I felt for half an hour afterwards.

"You will come and see us again some day, Monsieur Jean," he said; "remember we have not yet shown you the Tour de la Reine Berthe."

"Some day," repeated Franz, who was waiting to accompany me to the diligence. "Why, Monsieur Jean has promised to visit us—Angèle and me—next summer without fail. Have you not, Monsieur Jean?"

Yes, I said, I had promised, and I should look forward to my visit with pleasure. Then I made a little speech chiefly for Angèle's benefit, hoping they would be very happy. She lowered her eyes, and made no response.

"Hast thou nothing to say to monsieur for all his good wishes?" said the forester.

Still she did not speak.

"Monsieur Jean understands," said Franz gaily; and all the way through the forest he talked of the happiness that was in store for them both; it would be so good

for her, he said, to be happy after her hard girlhood.

At the Châlet à Gobet he left me. The diligence was not yet due, and time was precious to him. I sat down on the bench outside the quaint old inn, and watched him disappear among the dark pines. Two peasant women met him, greeted him, and then came on and sat down beside me. They were talking volubly, and I heard Franz's name mentioned several times—then Angèle's. I began to listen.

"I tell thee," said the one vehemently, "that she doesn't care a rap for him. All she wants is to marry and get away from her stepmother."

"Nonsense," replied her companion, "I don't believe it. Half the girls about lost their hearts to him when he came here. She's got the finest lover in the Jorat; of course she cares for him, 'tis only natural."

"I tell thee," persisted the other, "that she jilted her cousin Jacques Méris for Lehmann, and she'll jilt Lehmann if any one better comes by."

"But no one better will come by."

The first speaker nodded her head and looked wise.

"I could tell thee things," she said; "things I've seen lately. I've half a mind to speak to Lehmann myself."

"Thou hadst better mind thy own business," said the other woman. "Why shouldst thou spoil the girl's chance in life?"

"She'll spoil it herself if she doesn't mind. I know my own know. Ah, there comes the diligence. Mon Dieu! what a dust."

Little as I cared for Angèle Méris, I felt glad to think that her lover trusted her and had faith in the germ of good in her.

After my return to London I heard from Franz once or twice. Monsieur Eustace, he told me, had left them for the Tyrol after a stay of two months. The carving was finished and despatched to London. He was well pleased with it himself, so were many others who had seen it. Monsieur Eustace had scarcely carved at all after I went. I must tell him particularly what I thought of the panel with

the peacock's feathers on—that had been the most trouble.

Then our correspondence broke down. I had plenty to think of at home. Eustace Ferrier went down to Shropshire for the shooting, and then again for the Christmas balls, and each time I heard that he had been a constant visitor at my mother's house.

"I think Rachel is fretting a little about something," my mother wrote to me, "but she is not very communicative just now." In the following sentence she told me that Eustace Ferrier had gone to Nice for the rest of the winter.

The next I heard of my cousin was that he was engaged to be married to an American heiress whom he had met at Monte Carlo.

"I detest American girls," said my mother. "I know she has hooked him in."

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MISS LATIMER OF BRYANS.

By ELEANOR C. PRICE.

Author of "Alegia," "Red Towers," "The Little One," etc.

CHAPTER XXX.

IT was a day in January, the day before Miss Latimer's ball, and the great west gallery at Bryans Court, which her grandfather had built for such occasions, was already decorated in an old-fashioned and Christmas-like style. She had asked everybody, "without respect to persons," as Mrs. Arch expressed it, meaning that many people were included who had no claim to belong to the species "County." Mrs. Arch did not quite approve of this, nor, indeed, did Miss Fanny Latimer, who feared that the result might be awkward. But servants and relations had alike to understand that in this matter Porphyria meant to have her own way; and the Rector comforted Fanny, assuring her that people would know how to behave.

Almost everybody in the whole neighbourhood had accepted the invitation. They were all interested in the young mistress of Bryans, if they did not all agree in liking her, and those who had not already seen her future husband were curious about him. He was coming down that evening with his family. Some of his friends, as well as some old friends of the Latimers', were coming early the next day.

The weather was as wintry as possible. Snow, which fell about Christmas-time, had been followed by a hard frost, and the scene in that high, bleak country was arctic. The ponds and the little river were all blocks of ice; the walls and hedges were buried in great wreaths and drifts of

snow. At first it had seemed as if some of the roads must be impassable, but people had soon adapted themselves to circumstances and conquered obstacles, as they always do; and there was now little fear that any guests would fail to make their way to Bryans.

Poppy had called her aunt and Mr. Cantillon from their snug and delightful talk by the drawing-room fire to see the ball-room, on which Mrs. Arch and all the men and maids had been busy for the last day or two. It was a kind of annexe to the house, hardly visible from the front, but built in the same character, with long, stiff lines of windows. A broad passage led to it from the left of the entrance hall, passing by the dining-room, which had itself a door into the long, low room, a kind of hall, supported on pillars, which was the lower storey of the annexe. Here and in the dining-room supper was to be laid. A staircase, short and broad, led to the dancing-room, now gay with plants and evergreens, warm with large fires, and only waiting as it seemed for the low gallery to be filled with musicians and the long expanse of shining floor to be covered with dancers.

"My dear, you ought to give a ball every week," said Mr. Cantillon. "This is inspiring. What a floor! I feel as if I could dance myself. Mrs. Arch, you look as if you thought I could."

"I'm sure you could, sir, and I hope you will," said the housekeeper, who was waiting by the door to hear her work admired.

The Rector walked jauntily along the room, gently whistling a tune. Fanny paid Mrs. Arch a string of smiling compliments, while Poppy crossed over to one of the tall windows, and stood looking out

over the snowy garden and the leafless lines of trees which led away to the park. A red glimmer of sunset was beginning to shine in the west, giving some life to the dreary landscape. But in a moment, as she looked, it was blotted out by a heavy cloud, and softly, slowly, great flakes of snow began to float to the earth.

"Here is the snow again!" she said.

"Ah! we are not out of the wood yet," said the Rector.

Coming up to Poppy, he could not fail to notice a certain wistfulness, almost a certain worry, which clouded her fair face, and suggested that even such a lot as hers had its imperfections. And yet what could they be? Rich, happy, in perfect health—not really knowing the meaning of pain or disappointment, or even anxiety.

"Are you thinking of Arthur's journey? He will be well wrapped up," said the Rector.

She turned round and smiled at him; a sweet smile which seemed to him, somehow, to date from the old days when Arthur Nugent's name was not familiar. Certainly Love brings his own shadows; and it seemed to her old friend that Poppy's girlish gladness had been left behind in more single-hearted days.

"I know he will," she said. "Don't be too much surprised, but I was not thinking of him just then, or of the snow. I was thinking of Maggie. I shall be so very, very sorry if she can't come to-morrow."

"So will she, I have no doubt," said the Rector gravely. "But if she feels that she cannot leave Mr. Farrant, nobody ought to say much. But I can take a message for you on my way home."

"You are not going home. Not at all, if the snow comes on. What is this—a visitor?"

A footman came in and announced "Mr. Geoffrey Thorne."

"He has come from Maggie, no doubt," said Poppy to Mr. Cantillon. "Aunt Fanny, will you two stay here while I go and talk to him?"

"Yes, dear, that will be charming," said Miss Fanny Latimer, in whose small person all the brightness of life seemed now to be incarnated, and who had just sent Mrs. Arch away with beaming smiles.

"And if we only had some music—or even without it—Henry, I declare you will have to dance with me to-morrow."

"My dear, I would do anything else to please you. Dance yourself, I won't be

jealous. How I wish all these weddings were over! I suppose Poppy will not think it necessary to worry herself about that girl after she is married."

"You speak very slightly of 'all these weddings.' May I ask if you include mine?"

"Yes, I do include yours."

In the meantime Poppy had left these two happy lovers, and had gone to the drawing-room to see Geoffrey Thorne. It was a long time since he had been to the Court. He had, in fact, though in no rude way, tried all the winter to avoid her, and when he met her sometimes at Church Corner or in the road, his manner had always been quiet and dry. Even she could not flatter herself that there was any romance to be seen in the much-desired engagement; and the thought of Geoffrey had become slightly unpleasant to her. She could not fail to see that he was a different man from her old friend of younger days or of Herzheim. With all her unconsciousness, which had been real, some instinct hindered her from thinking of him much, or asking herself many questions about him. It was plain that Maggie trusted him, and that seemed well.

Her grandfather had had a slight stroke on Christmas Eve, and had lain in bed ever since. Geoffrey, Poppy knew, had been constantly there, and had done much for the old man, who was always, however, calling for Maggie if she happened to be out of the room. No nurse or servant could manage him at all. Poppy had done what she could for her friend, but it was little—so little that it grieved her. A strange shyness had grown up in Maggie; she was more changed even than Geoffrey. Their friend and liege lady felt their coldness and distance in a way in which she could not have believed, and which she would certainly never confess. She had time to realise it completely during those winter weeks, from Arthur's departure in December to this day in January when she hoped for his return. It was only the reflected happiness of her aunt and the dear Rector which gave Poppy a happy Christmas. Otherwise she was rather lonely, foolishly so, in spite of Arthur's letters, and unreasonably sad.

She had been through the snow to see Maggie the day before, and the girl had told her with a sort of affected carelessness that she would not be able to come to the dance; her grandfather was worse,

she thought, at any rate he was much more restless, and certainly could not be left alone. Poppy had very heartily expressed her disappointment. Maggie stared out of the window, and said she was very sorry. Poppy knew her well enough to be sure that she really was sorry, though not understanding why she should try to look indifferent. But it seemed as if there was not much to say. Perhaps Poppy had never before so keenly felt the change in her friend.

"Sit down and tell me about Maggie," she said to Geoffrey in most gentle, natural tones. "How is Mr. Farrant to-day?"

Geoffrey said there was not much change.

"She sent me," he said, "to tell you that she hopes to come to-morrow, after all. He has no objection."

Poppy felt somehow a little more surprise than she showed.

"I am very glad," she said. "Who is going to stay with him?"

"I am, if you must know," said Geoffrey with a slight smile.

"You!" said Poppy, astonished. "That is very kind of you," she added after a moment. "But—I'm afraid she won't enjoy it very much."

She looked at him and smiled. It seemed as if she would gladly have returned to the easy manner of the old days; but then it seemed also that Geoffrey had no intention of letting her throw a friendly bridge over the gulf between them—the sad gulf which his knowledge of Arthur Nugent's treason deepened and widened, to his mind, immeasurably. He could only be stiff and cold with her. He could hardly even accept her most ordinary civility, and was glad—or thought he was—that Maggie should supply him with a good excuse for keeping away from her dance. He would not have come to her to-day unless Maggie had insisted. And all the time, as he sat looking down at his hat and stick, with the air of as dull and stupid a country lout as had ever entered that room, her presence made an atmosphere round him which drew him to fall at her feet and tell her the whole truth without regard to any consequences. At one moment the impulse was almost too strong, and Poppy, with her fair face, her kind heart, her sweet, unseeing eyes, was near the edge of a scene which would have taught her much of a man's nature and the possibilities of life that lie just outside ordinary civilisation. But this last protecting power—

for good or evil, one hardly knows which in some cases—joined to his own strength of self-conquest, kept Geoffrey effectually from "making a fool of himself."

She, meanwhile, began to wonder painfully whether he was happy with Maggie—whether that engagement, for which she did not feel altogether responsible, much as she had wished for it, had been a mistake. Most certainly there must be some reason for his grave and gloomy looks. She could almost have asked him; and wondered a little at some power within herself, which absolutely refused to give utterance to any word of the kind.

She kept up a rather disjointed conversation, while his dulness weighed upon her more and more, till at last the gentle and generous Poppy, feeling thoroughly uncomfortable, began to be angry with her old friend; and yet not quite knowing why.

Presently she got up, walked to the fire, and stood leaning over it for a minute. He, under his eyelashes, watched her unconscious grace, the bend of her noble head, so beautifully set on, and was aware, helplessly, of a certain perplexity about her mouth, the shadow of a frown upon her brow. He thought he was boring her; no wonder; and she was probably expecting Captain Nugent.

"Good-bye, Miss Latimer," he said, standing still a little way off.

Something in his voice touched Poppy's heart.

"Must you go?" she said. "I am sorry you are not coming to-morrow, but you are very kind to Maggie, and I should have been so disappointed not to have her. Please tell her to come early, and—would you like to see my aunt and Mr. Cantillon? I left them in the dancing-room. It looks very pretty, and you understand decoration. Shall we go and look at it?"

"Thank you. As you like," murmured Geoffrey.

He wondered at himself, and felt ashamed of his own weakness. This was very far from being the self-conquest on which he had prided himself. Was it to be always so? When would the day come for him to look at Miss Latimer and touch her hand without this foolish overturn of his whole being? He had fancied a heroic, self-forgetting kind of love, a love which was to have no object but her happiness, and therefore might last for a lifetime, for eternity, whether he and she were married or single. Sometimes, as on this

unfortunate afternoon, he doubted whether he was strong enough for it.

He followed her meekly out of the room; but he did not want to see the ball-room—he hated the ball-room—and in this unhappy frame of mind he feared to meet the friendly eyes of Mr. Cantillon, who knew all. As they crossed the hall he glanced out of the window with its deep red curtains into a cold world of fast-falling snow.

"I think I must say good-bye," he said, "if you will forgive me. I must go back."

"Does Maggie want you?" she said, holding out her hand.

She did not at all press him to stay. Why, indeed, should she? He had nothing to say, and it was only to relieve him and herself of an evident burden that she had proposed to take him to the others. But she was sorry for him, though she did not understand him. The blindest person could not help seeing that he looked pale and thin, as well as unhappy.

"You are well, Mr. Thorne?" she said, as their hands touched.

She did not know why the words came with a little effort; they would have been so natural a few months ago. And she could not imagine why, to her great annoyance, she felt herself suddenly flushing a little. At the same moment, and consciously for the first time in her life—for at Herzheim, both in her human and spiritual nature, she had not been more than a grown-up child—she met Geoffrey's adoring eyes. In spite of himself, his whole heart and soul spoke in them, and with a passion which was absolutely strange to her. But no living woman, not even a woman like Poppy, without much more than one idea, could fail to understand it.

For an instant her truth-telling face expressed astonishment. Then, as poor Geoffrey, beaten again, foiled in his strong resolution, knowing that he had spoiled for ever any shade of happiness he had, turned red with shame and despair, her colour faded as quickly as it had risen, her eyelids with the thick brown lashes drooped a little haughtily, and she had turned away even before his hurried hand was on the door.

He did not answer her question, and she had forgotten it. But as he opened the door, facing a sudden storm of snow, he knew that she was still standing there, and heard her voice saying in its usual

even tones, and yet—or was it his fancy!—with a new, inevitable touch of coldness: "Good-bye. Give my love to Maggie and tell her I am very glad."

He walked away straight down the avenue with the snow driving in his face, and Maggie, if she had been impatient for his return, might have waited long enough, for he went tramping on for hours through the white and lonely lanes, till twilight fell, and a pale glimmering darkness, on that dreary winter afternoon. He had soon come to his senses, but only with bitter regrets and reproaches. Fool, and worse than fool! He had lost her friendship, the only thing, after all, that made life at Bryans endurable. An hour before the poor wretch had thought differently. He had felt that this friendship, unselfish on his side, unconscious on hers, was nothing but a long-drawn agony, and that anything which altered the state of things would be welcome. Now he knew that it had been the bread he lived on.

"I cannot go on living here!" he thought, and then came all the remembrance of the heavy chains with which he had bound himself.

It was a long, hard fight. But Geoffrey, in spite of his weakness, was a brave man, and at the end of his snowy walk he went back to Maggie, just the same, flushed with the cold, his eyes bright with an excitement which needed no explanation but the weather. She heard him stamping his feet and shaking his coat in the hall, and came creeping down the stairs, looking at him rather oddly over the banisters.

"Geoffrey, is that you? Did you see her?" she murmured in her softest tones.

It occurred to Geoffrey that he had gone out for half an hour, and had been away three hours and more. This seemed to want an explanation, but he did not know what to say. And somehow it was plain that Maggie expected nothing.

"Yes," he said. His voice sounded strange to himself, but not, apparently, to Maggie.

Her cheeks and eyes were as bright as his own. One would not have thought that she had spent a long afternoon watching by a sick bed.

"Well!" she said, and she came down into the light, standing near him, and looking expectantly. "What did she say? Is it settled? Did you see any one else, Geoffrey?"

"No, nobody else. Miss Latimer asked me to go and look at the dancing-room, and she said her aunt and Mr. Cantillon were there. But I didn't go."

"Did you expect to catch them waltzing? Dear old aillies!" said Maggie with a little laugh. "And what did Poppy say?"

"She said she was very glad, and that you were to go early."

"You are a brick, Geoffrey! And then——"

"Then I—I wasn't there all the time, you know. I took a little walk. How is he now?"

"Oh, very fretful. He has been in a horrid temper all the time. He does nothing but complain, and say he is neglected. You know he isn't. I can't sit there all day, can I? Sarah is in the next room with the door open. She can run at the least sound, and she could sit beside him, only you see he can't bear the sight of her. It's hard on me, isn't it? Geoffrey, my dress is come home. Would you like to see it?"

"Not now," he said.

He seldom disappointed her; and even then, unhappy as he was, his heart softened to the child-like face, the young, impatient nature and attractive ways. Poor Maggie! she, too, had her troubles. He thought, with a kind of stony indifference, that she would probably dance with Captain Nugent to-morrow night—once, certainly—the young man might not venture on more. It was a pity, but he could not help it. A more helpless fool than himself, he thought bitterly, could hardly be placed in a more difficult situation.

"Look here, Maggie," he said, "to-morrow I shall see your new frock with you in it, and then I shall understand better, you know. Now, shall I go and sit with your grandfather for a time?"

She came up to him and took hold of his coat.

"No, you shan't, thanks. He will do nothing but complain of me. To-morrow he will have forgotten what a bad girl I am. It only excites him. No, you are perfectly wet—soaked through. I shall give you some hot tea, with brandy in it, and send you straight home. Silly fellow! what an afternoon to go out walking."

But Geoffrey would have no tea. He said he wanted nothing. If he could be of no use he would go home at once; and he took up his hat again. Maggie was curiously affectionate, and looked wonder-

fully pretty, even to his preoccupied eyes. Standing close to him, she laid her flushed cheek against his wet shoulder.

"Dear, kind old fellow," she whispered.

There were moments when Maggie was irresistible. Geoffrey stooped to kiss her, hardly conscious, in the dim half-light, that trouble and excitement were shining in her eyes. But she drew herself quickly away.

"No, you are really too wet. Go home at once, or Lucy will never forgive me, and come again early to-morrow."

He went without further delay. She walked back along the hall after watching him disappear in the darkness, pressing her two hands to her cheeks that burned like fire.

"Bless him!" she sighed to herself. "One can't always be good, can one? And grandfather might have put something into his head. To-morrow! Arthur, Arthur!"

Very softly she began to hum a little waltz tune, and danced lightly a few steps at the foot of the stairs. Even in that silent old house nobody heard her.

Not long before Geoffrey reached Church Corner, Poppy Latimer, passing again through her hall with a distracted mind, was startled by the sight of a tall figure, white with snow, stepping quietly in from the wintry world outside.

"Arthur! Is it you?"

She was in his arms before she thought of any reproaches, but they were not long in coming. Arthur defended himself laughingly. Why should not he come by an earlier train than the others? Who had a better right to arrive when he liked? And why shouldn't he walk from the station? Much less likely to catch cold.

Poppy could not find it in her heart to say much; she always left that kind of thing to his mother. She hardly heard his assurances that the snow was nothing; the roads were trodden—trains late, to be sure, and no wonder. She only felt that worries about other people did not matter much, after all, as long as she had Arthur—as long as his loving impatience to see her would not let him wait for the other people's train.

WINTER SKETCHES IN NORWAY.

IN TWO PARTS. PART II.

WHEN we had sledged for five days, the sledge bells had become so familiar to us that we missed them as soon as we entered

a house. They kept on ringing in a phantom manner in our ears; but we craved for the real thing. I can still hear them, and while I hear them I see the procession of mountains and dark forests, and stumpy, quaint little log-houses—some with red faces—with the snow deep on their roofs, of rivers far down on the steep side of the road, silent and white save where they dropped from one level to another, and a drapery of green icicles marked the frozen cascade.

We were struck by the magpies in the villages as we neared the railway to Christiania. A dozen of them might be seen carrying their tails jauntily on a single house-top, and we sledged into the midst of a meeting of about twenty of them one day. If no other sound was audible in the quiet villages, the animated vocabulary of the magpies declared itself. The Norwegians would think but poorly of the stranger who tried to molest these birds. We in England have rather a prejudice against magpies; but in Norway it is just the opposite, and the farmer upon whose premises half-a-dozen couples take up their abode, rubs his hands and anticipates good luck during the year.

Had we but properly understood the extent of the superstition still extant in the minds of the Northmen, we might have induced one or two of our guides to unbosom themselves to us about their supernatural experiences. There was one man whom we took with us in the dead of night for a fifteen-mile stage, who could, I feel sure, have unfolded a tale or two of imaginary horrors and disaster if so he had been minded.

While we were going along with this man, we heard a mysterious sound like the rustling of the leaves of a great forest of oak-trees.

"What is it?" I asked of my man. But for reply he did naught except snatch the reins from my hands and encourage the pony to its briskest pace. We galloped furiously for a quarter of an hour—luckily the snow had here been controlled by a snow-plough; then the man gave me the reins again, and, with an incoherent muttering, leaned back as if he were relieved.

The strange noise had gone from us in the meantime.

It now occurs to me that we were favoured, or the man fancied it, by a visit from the Aasgaardreia, or the wild riders. "These are the spirits of drunkards, tavern-brawlers, and perjurers who have

not been condemned to hell. They are compelled to ride over the world till doomsday. They are mounted on coal-black steeds with eyes of fire, and governed with red-hot iron bridles and bits; and their clinking and rush as they sweep over mountain and lake are heard for miles. They ride most at Christmas-time, and especially love the place of drunken fightings and carousals and where murder is breeding."

The odd thing is that we were just then in a part of Norway celebrated of old for its lawlessness, and where even now the people are easily stirred by beer or spirits into criminal excesses.

Our last day's ride was mainly along a great lake, the lowest of a series, all connected by a river. My friend came a very unpleasant cropper in the descent to this lake from the forest inn where we had slept. The snow was six feet high on either hand of us, and he was turned over into it so completely that he seemed like to be smothered, for it was new snow and fine as sawdust. However, he was not hurt, and we were soon on the ice thoroughfare, marked out by small fir-trees stuck here and there in the lake and frozen fast.

On the morning of this day we had seen a glorious sunrise. The gold on the snow of the peaks in the west was alone a sight worth all the fatigues we had gone through. Afterwards the sky was a speckless blue until the evening. Then the western heavens ruddied superbly, the wisps of cloud turned crimson, purple, cold slate-colour, and black in succession, and the bitterest night in our Norwegian experience began.

The moon and stars still found us on this long lake, though near its extremity. Spite of our deer-skin and fur gloves our fingers could hardly hold the reins, they were so desperately numbed. Never did we feel more grateful for hot coffee than when at length we got to our last station but one of the day. That evening we reached permanently again the district of white bread, mutton chops, and the daily papers. The last told us of a downfall of snow fifty-six hours in duration in the very part of the country through which we had sledged. We had the best of good reasons for being able to confirm the newspaper report. While I live I shall never think of snow without recalling these Norwegian valleys as we saw them.

Christiania the next day almost con-

fused us by its vivacity. It is rather a dull capital really, but after a week in the silent wilds, the music of its sledge bells, its cracking of whips, and the worldly babble in the coffee-room of the "Grand Hotel," were almost too much for us. But, as may be supposed, we soon got used to them, and a zest for the stronger pleasures of life returned to us.

Here, at any rate, we had some chance of using our skates. The fiord was frozen a mile or two above the city. It was not good ice, but gave sufficient pretext for skating. For my part I liked to see the Norwegian young ladies gliding to and fro a deal better than to watch the gymnastic performances of the young men of Christiania, who think themselves peerless skaters.

It was best of all at night, when the moon was on the fiord, and especially brilliant on the white surface of the King's castle which hugs the water-side on the opposite bank. There was no great concourse of people here at such a time. The spirit of the pastime could be enjoyed to perfection. With a little fancy it was possible to imagine all manner of things about the veiled distances up and down the inlet, just shimmered by the frosty light.

But even in Christiania—or rather, in the neighbourhood—snow-shoeing held as the supreme sport. We used to see little girls in troops setting off in the morning, their feet wrapped in the pretty Lapp shoes of reindeer skin with the fur outside, and with their long wooden runners in their hands. And in the afternoon they returned, crimson from their fine healthy exercise, having gone about twice as many miles as they were years old. Nor did they have the fun to themselves. Men of fifty took their share in it, and seemed the better for it.

The second day of our sojourn in the capital—gradually recovering from our exertions and privations, both far from excessive—was Sunday. We drove out to see the old Akers Church in the suburb, which has a recorded existence of about nine hundred years.

We half expected to find it a wooden oddity, like that of Borgund in the mountains, which looks for all the world like a cluster of conical belfries joined at the bases. No such thing, however. Akers is a stone building, heavy and prison-like as befits its era. Of architectural decoration it has none. Its beauty lies in its grim strength and the solidity of

its granite columns. It has an exquisite carved oak pulpit in keeping with the style of the church—massive and compact, and as different as possible from the carved work of the Belgian artists in the great churches of the Low Countries.

While we sat admiring this pulpit, a procession of men and women trooped in with two babies in their midst. It was a baptism. The children were as quiet as the Norwegian winter. Even the palms full of water upon their little foreheads did not awaken them. The beruffed pastor made the service impressive; the massive church added to the impressiveness. Afterwards the god-parents, who had been separated and placed on opposing sides according to sex, filed past the altar and gave their offerings, and the babes were taken back to the capital to begin their life course.

The old church of Akers is the best thing in Christiania, though the Viking ship in the museum runs it close.

This famous relic was unearthed only in 1880, from the side of one of the fiords at the mouth of the great Christiania fiord. It is shrined as it deserves to be in a great shed all to itself, with glass cases round the chamber containing the charred trifles, bones, etc., which were disinterred with it. The walls are hung with mouldering ropes and detached fragments of the boat; and also with photographs of it and its various parts. You may walk all round it on a gravelled path, and so thoroughly examine it as it stands in imposing ruin, buttressed on supports as if it were in process of construction, instead of a relic about eleven centuries old.

An imaginative man may, with the help of precise description, readily furnish it for one of the many marauding cruises in which doubtless it took a part. Among the odds and ends which were found with it were bits of homespun, supposed to belong to the dead Viking's tent, and some peacock's feathers. These last are reasonably believed to have been the result of the Northman's voyages in southern seas, since peacocks were then rare in Norway. They may even have been taken from some Saxon homestead on the east coast of England. The Viking's peacock was interred with him in the middle of the boat, his horses and dogs being slain and laid like dead sentinels outside the death chamber. Of all these animals, as well as of the Viking him-

self, the bones may be seen in the cases of the room. The boat was drawn from the sea with its stern towards the water, and all the details of the burial having been settled, and the Viking himself placed where he had commanded so often, "the whole of the ship, except the sepulchral chamber, was covered with potter's clay, with a layer of moss and twigs on the top, upon which the mound was raised."

In extreme length the boat is about one hundred feet, by a middle width of sixteen feet. Its lines excite the admiration of accomplished shipwrights in our day. Still, it is interesting to mark how the Norwegians of the coast use boats modelled quite after this old fashion. In the Faroe Isles the curved prow is even more emphatic in its resemblance to this Viking's ship, whence it may have descended by the regular process of one generation from another.

Perhaps the most suggestive ornaments of the boat are the four shields fixed to its gunwale. They are round and wooden, with about a third of their area raised above the ship's side as a protection to the marauders.

While we examined the thing, and listened to the commentaries of our guide, it was interesting to see the modern Norwegians gazing at this survival of the time of their forefathers. They had not much to say about it, however, the pity of its dilapidation seeming most of all to strike them. But there is no knowing what profundity of feeling was in them. For the Norwegian does not wear his heart upon his sleeve, nor can he always express his thoughts in words.

From our seats in the sumptuous café of the "Grand Hotel" we had a pleasant hour or two daily of diversion with the notables of Christiania. Slim waists are the vogue with Norwegian men of fashion. Some of them were, indeed, almost womanish, and it surprised us to see the difference between the man in his large loose fur overcoat and without it. Indeed, the capital here, like capitals elsewhere, does not seem to be the place in which to see the typical men of the land. Broad shoulders were by no means the rule, and there were as many dark eyes as blue eyes on the promenade. In one or two cases, however, we had compensation. There was a certain youth who came in to read the papers, and who might have stood for the portrait of the conventional idea we hold

of the Vikings. Among the ladies also beauty was not common; though, on the other hand, pleasing faces abounded. The keen air seemed determined that the Norse girls should not fall short in the matter of complexions.

It is well known that Norway does not feel very warmly towards its sister country of Sweden. The Norwegians mean to take the first possible opportunity of becoming independent. They do not dislike their present King. Indeed, it would be odd if they did—for there never was a better and more considerate monarch than Oscar the Second. It is his tact and goodness that have saved Scandinavia from the doubtful consequences of open disruption. But the future may see the two countries going each their own way without heed of the other. One wonders how the Swedes will feel towards Russia when that sad event comes to pass. Even as it is, the animosity between these two nations is considerable.

Policy, as much as their uncommon humanity, has throughout this century kept the Scandinavian sovereigns from showing anything like an autocratic spirit. They remember their origin—and so do their subjects.

One thinks of this when one notices the relative situations of the Royal Palace in Christiania and the local Parliament House. The latter is set sideways to the principal street, and faces the Palace at the one end of it. To most eyes this architectural feature is trying. But, we are told, "the reason assigned by a sturdy Norwegian gentleman for this singularity was that it was intended as a hint to the King that if he did any act that was unconstitutional the National Assembly would be on the look-out for it, and would act accordingly."

This was probably a humorous explanation, and yet the meaning at the bottom of it is sincere enough. Rumour says the King does not enjoy his visits to Christiania very much. He finds the Norwegians morose and unsociable after the Swedes of Stockholm, who have been called, not unreasonably, "the Parisians of the North." But he goes through his duties manfully, and though he may not gain the entire good will of the nation, he does not fail to charm all individuals with whom he comes in touch.

A Royal reception here now is much what it was a quarter of a century ago. The King does not consider that he demeans himself by taking a personal interest in the

comfort of his guests. Of his predecessor also, it is told how he would go to and fro among the Christians at the State ball, trying to enliven them. On one such occasion he discovered a police official in the ball-room doing nothing. Him the King clapped on the back with these words: "Come now, M., why don't you dance? Keep the company alive, there's a good fellow."

There is something rather pathetic about this, but the people of Christiania are at least alive to their inborn dulness. They are the sort of people who, no doubt, would make great sacrifices on behalf of their patriotism. They, and the Norwegians in general, are a large-handed and large-hearted people, prone to take restricted views of things. At home they show to the most advantage. The Americanised Norseman is not a pleasing specimen of the human creature, and yet—the pity of it!—he is admired and envied for the dashing way in which he swears and flings his crowns about, and calls for drinks with mysterious names; and more than any other kind of man he seduces his simple countryfolk out of their sequestered valleys to cross the Atlantic and try their luck as he has tried his, and not found it wanting.

The Norseman is so taciturn that the Englishman feels he is a relation, and so honest that he compels the respect of the stranger. He is used to a certain amount of formality in social intercourse, but it must not be set down against him on the score of politeness. He leaves politeness to the Swedes, who are welcome to it. The fair sex rather embarrasses him, unless he is a man of culture or absolutely no education. But when they are no longer fair, he does not scruple to regard them as beings capable of much hard labour.

The Norse women are like their husbands and brothers—simple-minded, simple-natured, and true to their men-kind.

The country people are not over-clean, and they do not pretend to be refined. The stronger sex expropriates vilely. No room is sacred to them in this matter. But they swear little, and except, perhaps, as regards a horse, do not cheat the stranger. By the light of clear-eyed truth, their virtues certainly exceed their vices, and they may be accounted one of the higher order of nations.

One does not recognise this so much while one is in their midst as afterwards. The inconveniences of Norwegian travel-

ling and Norwegian cookery do their best to act as a prejudice against the people themselves. But it will not do. For my part, I shall not be content until I have renewed my acquaintance with the Norsemen, begun not altogether auspiciously in the depth of a Norwegian winter.

ALONG DOCKSIDE.

WHERE the tramcar stops just beyond Poplar Station stands the gateway to the India Docks, a classic archway, whity-brown, and somewhat shabby, like one who has seen better days. Beyond are seen the masts of ships. Not a forest of masts by any means, for the changes of time have diminished the importance of these India Docks, and here and there a grass-grown quay and old deserted warehouse are memorials of the days when fleets of beautiful sailing ships discharged the products of east and west. But if "Ichabod" is written up in places, in invisible but plainly to be deciphered chalk marks, it is not altogether ichabod by any manner of means. Here are busy corners where steamers of a well-known line discharge and take in cargo, and where everything marches with the regularity of a well-adjusted machine, ships departing at the hour fixed, for the uttermost parts of the earth, and others from the same distant regions knocking, so to speak, at the dock gates as the clock strikes the hour at which they are due home.

The India Docks have lost somewhat their brisk, tarry, heave-ho character, so also has Poplar abandoned something of its early seafaring ways. The confectioners' shops are like other confectioners' shops, and don't supply captains' biscuits and sea tack to any appreciable extent; the little tobacconist at the corner has dabbed the whitewash brush over the inscription, "Ships supplied," which is still, however, fairly legible. Yet still in the neighbourhood is "navigation taught"; there is a mission for seamen hereabouts, but, alas! where are the seamen? Captain Deadeye adjusts his sextant from an upper floor window in one of those bright, well-soured, genteel-looking houses which are such a credit to the neighbourhood, for Poplar is not more slummy than Notting Hill, and if it were not for the smoke that blows over from the West End at times, its atmosphere would be unexceptionable. Not thus highly polished, indeed, is the

actual neighbourhood of the dock gates. Knots of labouring men hang about and lounge on the kerb in front of the public-house doors, whether on the chance, rather a remote one, of a call for extra hands, or as being the focus of news and discussion, where the public opinion of the dockers makes itself heard.

There is a certain impressiveness in the scene: the cloudy, murky sky, with faint gleams of sunlight, but more potent threatenings of storm; white flags flutter from the peaks of tall masts; the whitish-brown archway, and the white placards, so many luminous spots on the dull surface; and below the labourers, gaunt and gnarled, in their faded, patched apparel, with the sodden road at their feet, and an opening beyond that shows a row of pinched and hungry-looking dwellings, stretching out to a dim, undistinguishable waste.

But to join the group at the gate and master the contents of the announcements there posted, gives an impression to an outsider, who is perhaps unacquainted with all the ins and outs of the case, that something like a golden age has come for the docker, who is on a permanent footing, with his twenty-four shillings a week, his sick pay under certain regulations, and even at the end of his career, when incapacitated for further work, a pension—actually six or seven shillings a week—for the rest of his life, a sum which, if it would not afford luxuries, would, anyhow, make the superannuated docker a welcome boarder in the house of son or daughter. There is another category of registered hands, who are hired by the week; and a third of extra hands, engaged upon the system that formerly regulated almost the entire bulk of the labour employed at the docks, that is, of payment by the hour.

On the whole, the changes of the last few years have been to the advantage of the workman; and therefore in dockland, if nowhere else, we might look to find people contented and even jubilant. But one perhaps unexpected result of the change has been to cut off from the poorest and neediest of the East End labourers that chance of staving off downright starvation, which was afforded by casual employment at the docks. The man out of work in whatever employment naturally gravitated to the dock gates. If crowds of eager, hungry workmen are no longer to be found at these gates with the first approach of winter, it is because the hungry, homeless, and forlorn, the elderly,

the rheumatic, the cranky ones, who might once have hoped for a bit of work now and then, are now aware that there is no further chance for them, and that the regular docker with his union ticket is rather likely to resent their presence. All this may be a change in the direction of the well-being of the fittest, but one cannot help a feeling of pity for the cripples who are crowded out.

It is the dinner hour now, and the roadway is pretty well crowded with workmen of all kinds, from wharves and docks and factories far and near. Groups of men have gathered here and there, talk flies freely from one group to another; it is the voice of labour, which has its own peculiar resonance and significance. And the observer can hardly help noticing how much that voice has changed in recent days, and how different the bearing of the man who lives by the wages of labour.

But our business is to keep along dockside, and to do this requires a little local knowledge, for there is no direct communication by land between the various sections of the united docks, for they are all united now, on this side of the river at least, and we must not talk, except as shareholders, of this company or the other; it is all "London and India Docks," as you may read on the placards which are posted up on the route. However, the line of continuity is kept up by a little halfpenny omnibus, one of a line that maintains constant communication between Poplar and Canning Town, and once at Canning Town Station you feel yourself again in the empire of dockland. The placards are all of lines of steamers for ports familiar and unknown. The luggage trains that thunder past are charged with iron-bound cases on their way to the docks; and in the railway carriages you recognise at once the seafaring cachet, so long are they, so open, so windy, with cyclones eddying through and whirling gusts from every point of the compass, and so redolent of tobacco of the strongest brands that the very whirlwinds seem to be mainly composed of vaporised tobacco; and the passengers are stewards and firemen, engineers and stokers, with a young middy here and there of the mercantile marine, and a mate or two absorbed with bills of lading, with a stevedore, perhaps, and half-a-dozen dockers, and some sailors' wives charged with their husbands' kits.

But at times, instead of the docks aboard, we have the gas; as just now

when a few hundred gas hands who have dined, are going back to Beckton to finish their day among the retorts and furnaces. They fill the train as full as it will hold, and, as they are of cheerful and lively manners, their talk and chaff flies briskly about from end to end of the long carriages amid the fumes of tobacco from countless pipes. All hereabouts is docks, and the stations we stop at are so many stages along dockside. Tidal Basin tells its own tale, and so does Custom House, and here the gasmen turn us dockers out; for the train as it happens goes to Beckton, beyond which lies Nowhere, a vast undiscovered region from whose bourne no traveller returns, for the simple reason that he has no chance of getting there.

The little dock train is waiting for us, the train that just runs up and down alongside the Albert Dock without troubling itself about fresh fields and pastures new. And the train, too, sports the new title: "London and India Docks." That title includes everything, and might be a good deal expanded if it were meant to convey the various regions of which the produce is landed in this long string of docks which begins close by the Tower and ends at Tilbury, a good way towards the Nore. A glance at the list of shipping in the various docks, which is posted up at the station, shows how general is the resort from all parts of the world to our London and India Docks. There are a hundred vessels or so of tonnage ranging from the nine thousand tons of some new ironclad lately launched from the Thames Ship-building Company's yard—down to the "Margaret Hoy" from Yarmouth of seventy tons. But nearly half the list is composed of big steamers ranging from two thousand to six thousand tons, which represent a fair slice of the carrying trade of the world.

And now we start once more for our interrupted journey along the docks—this time with a load of real seafaring passengers. On one side is the dull level of the Essex marshes, with oozy channels and portentous mud-banks, and on the other the low sheds of dockside topped by the rigging of ships and flaunting flags of all nations, with blue-peter flying at the fore of here and there a ship. It is not long before we are at the very end of dockland, where it joins the river now lying low and slimy below the cells of the great dock gates.

How many of you who have sailed from our docks for China, Australia, India, or

Zanzibar, have taken your last refresher on shore at that comfortable, solid, red-brick hotel which is known as the Galleons, so named from Galleons Reach, perhaps connected with Spanish treasure ships which Drake may have captured in the reign of good Queen Bess? It is the last house, for a good many, on this side of the world—and for as many, no doubt, it is the first also—like that famous Inn on the Land's End, which bears such a double legend as the shield that the two knights quarrelled about long since. But at Galleons they reckon more by tides than times, and dead low water stands for what is midnight to more inland places. And thus a kind of hushed repose rests upon the upper part of the house. Sea captains sleep the sleep of the just, having verified their chronometers, and arranged to be called an hour before high water. The Ayah has hushed her charges to sleep till such time as the big fire-ship begins to sound its solemn warning for departure, in the still night air. Two or three veteran warriors, who have said good-bye, and put their luggage on board the P. and O. steamer, and feel that they have done with England for years, perhaps for ever, are sitting in a sunny sheltered nook and smoking silently in melancholy resignation.

But down below in the general bar, what a hubbub of voices from all sorts and conditions of men! Carmen and dockers in their moleskin garments, cosy over their pipes and tankards; emigrants laying in stores of bread and cheese, and sausage-rolls, and slices of cake; engineers and firemen taking in fire-water in the form of Scotch whisky. Tom, when he has finished his can, will drive off in his pair-horse van with a load for Bermondsey. Jack, his friend, who pays for the beer, will soon be driving with eight hundred horse-power engines as far as Calcutta.

As for the docker he is a man apart, with his own dialect, curt and enigmatical, yet loaded with emphatic epithets. He has his own affairs to discuss with his fellows, and when he has finished his last "half-pint" he moves stiffly but briskly away in the direction of the dock gate, directly opposite, where work is just beginning again after the interval of the dinner hour.

Now the great basin is before us, with its rows of strange hammer-headed, stiff-necked cranes, its lines of big steamers surrounded by an attendant fleet of barges and buoys, and its great iron-cased sheds,

in a set and rigid perspective. There is plenty of work going on, but it is not going on at any great pace. Also there are a goodly number of ships, but with plenty of room for more. The feverish energy that once marked the docker's work is gone—gone is the greybeard, reputed as a gentleman of property in decadence, staggering pluckily under a load that almost overwhelmed him; gone is the broken captain with the mighty beard; gone are the company, disbanded and reduced, who toiled so eagerly for the casual pittance of a few hours' work. The docker of to-day is rather brawny and well-fed in appearance than otherwise. He has the air, too, of knowing his own importance. The great hydraulic cranes swing to and fro, their loads descend rattling into the deep cavernous hold; crates and boxes, balanced three or four together, sometimes a great iron-bound case, as big as a workman's cottage, that holds a gilded chariot for some wealthy Rajah, or a grand piano for the Ranees, or a threshing-machine, perhaps, for some settler at the Antipodes, or half a hundred railway-carriage wheels, or a suite of drawing-room furniture, or again, a few thousand tins of biscuits, with a dozen or two of bicycles; all these things the dockers on the quay grapple to themselves with iron hooks, bind them with rope or chain and despatch them swinging aloft, and whirling round with an impetus that threatens to demolish anything they come in contact with. But the engineer in his little box at the top of the crane, who swings and turns with it, keeps his head marvellously under the circumstances. For down goes the load, somehow hitting exactly the hole that opens into the depths below, where other men are waiting to cast off its ligatures and stow it away under the directions of the dusty and harassed stevedore.

But the unloading is the business! Down in the deep holds, and every hour deeper down, hotter and more uncomfortable. Here are a few thousand matted bags of sticky, treacly-looking stuff from the Zambesi River with overpowering tropical odour, and who knows what strange, uncanny creatures may lurk among the weird-looking packages, bound with palm-leaves, or hitched together with huge bamboos! Scorpions have been landed before now, or copper-coloured snakes of deadly aspect found as stowaways among the cargo. Then there are the tea-ships, disgorging their thousands

of tea-chests, adorned with the florid Chinese symbols, from the Flowery Land, or of more prosaic aspect from India or Ceylon. Nice clean work this as the square boxes chase each other down the long slides and are wheeled off to the roomy storehouses, where with their companions they form huge barricades and terraces of tea, with just enough space between them to allow of examination. The great Atlantic traders are on the other side of the basin, indistinct in the distance, loading up with notions for New York, or discharging the grain they bring in bulk with the aid of gangs of "cornies," or corn porters, who form the élite of the docking army in point of physique, and have the somewhat overbearing character of a corps d'élite.

Vivid is the life, too, about the place where the P. and O. steamers lie berthed, one that came in yesterday and another that is to go out to-night. Here are Lascars in picturesque costumes hauling away at the boats, the head man with more turban, more scarf than the rest, and more picturesque and flowing garments, giving the time to the rest as they pull together, with strident cries. On the quay a negro, grey and worn, wrapped in an old drugget, is performing incantations over a paint-pot, as if he were some Obi man preparing his poisonous brew.

Here again is a big New Zealand boat with a name spicy of the soil she hails from. Her mutton and beef have all been disposed of—perhaps they are cooked and eaten by now—and here she is taking in all kinds of miscellaneous cargo for the return voyage. Another big steamboat is from Marseilles laden with spoils of Tunis and of Algiers, with dark and keen-looking Arab sailors wrapped up in their loose caftans, but shivering nevertheless in the cool, mist-laden breeze.

Among all these flitting figures that come and go, and form dissolving views of all kinds in the murky atmosphere, the docker remains constant and unchangeable. He is not in the best of humours at this present moment. Where two or three come together, shadowy figures in the great storehouses, wheeling in and wheeling out boxes, crates, and packages of every kind, or down in the hold of some big steamer, or on the quay engaged in supplying the monstrous trunk of the hydraulic crane, that with hissing and gurgling of water twirls its burden overhead; wherever and in whatever position the little group

of dockers may be found, it is far from being a centre of contentment and amiable feelings. He does not believe that anybody, least of all his employers, have any good intentions towards him. He has no faith in prospective benefits such as pensions, nor has he any fancy for a humdrum weekly wage. Let us work like horses day and night, and then hey for beer and skittles! This is the docker's notion of the natural fitness of things. Perhaps there is some amount of reason in the docker's view. Nothing gives so much zest to irksome labour as the knowledge that the more you work and the faster, the more you will get. And among ships where speed in clearance is essential, there seems no better system possible than that of letting out the work to the dockers represented by their own leaders.

And now we have tramped from one end to the other of the Albert Docks, and casting a look behind, there is the great basin like an arm of the sea, its limits lost to view in indefinite mist, and with its fleet of steamers in majestic tranquillity, while fussy steam launches and noisy tugs bluster about here and there. Beyond lie more docks, more quays, more shipping. The big swingbridge is whirled round, and the narrow waterway appears that unites the two systems. There is a crush almost like the crush into a lock in the upper Thames, when summer is on, and the fair calm evenings; a big red-nosed steamer, two or three tugs, half-a-dozen barges bumping along, the harbour-master's launch, a few river craft with huge swinging booms; all these must come through for some reason or other, and a little cluster of people accumulates, cut off from the opposite shore. But there is always a railway station handy along dockside, and a train with its long draughty carriages wreathed with tobacco smoke; and so we may follow the line of retreat by that famous thoroughfare, the Commercial Road East, where fragmentary glimpses of docks and shipping flash before the eyes at intervals all along the route, till all such associations are lost in the whirl of traffic about Whitechapel and the City Road.

Now, in this hasty view of the docks a good deal of ground has been gone over, and there would be still more to cover in order to give a complete view of the scenes of the dockers' labours. Numbers of men are employed on the wharves in Southwark, and the Commercial Docks have their own system of labour. And from London

Bridge, where the work of loading and discharging cargo begins, down to the latest and most distant of big docks at Tilbury, following the windings of the river, is a stretch of about five and twenty miles; so that one set of docks is divided from another by distances which practically confine the workman to his own particular set. The London Docks may be wanting hands, while nearly all the men at Tilbury are compulsorily idle, or it may be just the other way. In either case the man wanting work is unable to avail himself of the temporary demand elsewhere.

A central employment bureau has been suggested to aid the unemployed in seeking work in the proper quarter, which would to some extent palliate the evil. But Mr. Tom Mann, the representative of the general body of dockers, proposes a plan which almost takes the breath away by its boldness and, indeed, grandeur of conception.

Briefly, he proposes to straighten the River Thames by a channel broad and deep cutting off the great bight that forms the so-called Isle of Dogs. The old river-bed running round by Blackwall and Greenwich, locked and embanked, would form a series of docks and quays; a noble crescent, in fact, where all the ships of the world might find berths, which would afford a frontage of some three miles in the most compact manner. As a piece of engineering the work offers few difficulties. The peninsula is, in fact, already divided by the West India Docks. The obstacles in the way of such a scheme are the immense private or vested interests which would be disturbed, and the costs of construction, which, if taken up by any public body, would involve a heavy local taxation.

On the other hand, instead of the dreary, half-drowned Isle of Dogs, we might have noble quays, magnificent blocks of warehouses, with canals and waterways for streets, a sort of commercial Venice in immediate communication with the very heart of the great city. London and the Thames would be reunited in that intimate bond which should form the pride and glory of both.

Practically, also, the effect would be to unite the two sides of the Thames in the completest manner, for provision would be made without any difficulty for subways beneath the new channel of the river, and the working population would be housed in roomy and convenient dwellings, in-

stead of being crushed into the dreary and agueish marshes to which they are now confined by the conditions of their labour. And if the cost would be great, it must be remembered that it would be spent in the midst of us, would be chiefly expended on manual labour, and on public works which would be largely reproductive.

THE THIRD GENERATION.

OVER the field and across the stile,
Stepping daintily, each by each,
He looking down with a lofty smile,
She with her innocent childish speech;
Seven and five—so they count their years,
Plants that have bloomed under sunny skies,
All that is noble within us stirs,
Meeting the gaze of those frank young eyes.

Life to them is a land of dreams,
Showing no shadow as yet of care,
Scarcely possible now it seems,
Friend, that we reckoned it once as fair;
We, who broken, and worn, and grey,
Hope and pleasure for ever dumb,
Stand aside from the path to-day,
Giving place when the children come.

Giving place—with a full content—
Branches these of our parent stem,
All the gifts that to us were sent
Will be trebled, we trust, for them;
Wider knowledge and wiser plan
May they own when their path is trod!
Finding the link 'twixt the child and man
Is as the link 'twixt the man and God.

A DEAN'S MEMORIES.

IN TWO PARTS. PART I.

BIOGRAPHERS are nowadays as plentiful as barrel-organs. We see a new one advertised well-nigh every week. Anybody who may either really be, or may think himself, a Somebody, may feel certain that his "life" will come out soon after his death. Nobody need despair now of having his name published; although, as Sir Charles Coldstream coolly said when he looked into the crater, there may be "nothing in it."

The chronicling of small beer is a fashionable pastime in these century-ending days, nor is the beverage improved much when it is home-brewed. Doubtless, it is true that in the commonest of lives there is the making of a novel; for accidents will happen in the most humdrum existence, and romances have occurred to the most prosaic folk. But it was not every sailor who of old could get to Corinth, and to steer with perfect safety through the shallows of a life-stream is not a common gift. The art of writing really readable autobiographies is a rather rare accom-

plishment, as most people who try to keep a diary may find.

Very gladly, then, we welcome an exception to the rule in the vastly pleasant "Memories" which have just enriched our bookshelf.* The present Dean of Rochester is a man widely known and most deservedly esteemed, not merely as a preacher but as a practiser of charity and goodness, and, moreover, as a sensible and true friend of the poor. He is likewise a good gardener, and the fact that his Rose-book has now reached its twelfth edition may be accepted as a proof that he knows much more of floriculture than many a man descended like him from the gardener of Eden. Whether as judge at a flower show, or an orator at a Church Congress, or as a Lenten lecturer beneath the big dome of St. Paul's, his presence equally is welcome and his good influence felt. He is received alike with pleasure in the cottage of the labourer and the mansion of the Squire. He has preached, he states unboastingly, in many a British diocese, and has ridden to the front with many a famous pack. He frankly owns his love of fox-hunting, as a fine and manly sport; nor does he hide his taste for cricket as a noble English game. He has a strong sense of the duties of true Churchmen in these uneasy, restless days of doubting, and discussing, and weak wavering of faith, when so many lives are wasted in the sad pursuit of pleasure, and so many men fall martyrs while posing as apostles of the Gospel of Rush. But while he believes firmly in the power of prayerful service, and would condemn most sternly any laxity of life, he would freely let the clergy enjoy good healthful exercise, provided they in no way slackened zeal for their good work.

The Dean divides his "Memories" according to the alphabet, and his thirty chapters are classed under twelve heads. We find a happy blending of matters multifarious, and can let our reading wander from archery to authorship, from cricketers to clerics, from gardening to gambling, from hymnody to hunting, from painters to poachers, and from working-men to wits. The book is introduced to us as "the holiday task of an old boy who desires, and hopes that he deserves, to rest, but is too fond of work to be quite idle," and who hopes that "the varied experience of a long and happy life" may furnish what his readers may find of use and interest. The Dean dislikes

* "The Memories of Dean Hole." Published by Edwin Arnold, 37, Bedford Street, E.C.

Jack Horner, as a selfish little sensualist, who sat stuffing in a corner, and blowing his own trumpet when he should have been whipped. But Jack Horner, young or old, big or little, might do worse than sit in a corner with this "old boy's" book on his knees; put in his thumb where he will, he may be pretty sure of picking out a plum, in the shape of some good sterling piece of sensible advice, or some fragment of experience well worth laying to heart, or some capital good story to be stored for repetition.

Here, for instance, is a dialogue which the Dean heard while out hunting, the wood where it occurred having shown no hope of sport, owing to the presence of a vulpecidal keeper:

"'Good morning, Mr. Davis,' said the keeper. 'Morning,' growled Mr. Davis (the huntsman). 'Has your dogs had pretty good sport, Mr. Davis?' 'We don't call 'em dogs,' said Jack, 'we call 'em hounds.' 'Oh, don't yer?' said the keeper. 'I thote yer did!' 'Oh, you thote so, did you?' replied Davis. 'You're like Thompson's dog; he thote they were a-bringing him his breakfast, and he came up, a-jumping and wagging his tail, and—they took him out and hanged him!'"

Here, too, is a description of another hunting scene, wherein the Dean was a chief actor, and not merely in the audience. The other principal performer was "a bright, well-bred bay, with black points, a beautiful head, clean shoulders, and strong propelling powers, though anything but a screw." The progress of the drama is thus pleasantly related:

"We were approaching a fence, when he saw, and I ought to have seen, the hounds on the other side make a sudden turn. He turned with them, and as he resisted my endeavour to keep him in his former line, I struck him sharply with my whip. In three seconds I was on my back by his side. I really don't know how he did it; but if a box of dynamite had exploded under me, I could not have been more summarily dislodged. Then the horse never attempted to move. I believe that if he could have spoken he would have said: 'I'm very sorry; please get up; but you mustn't do it again.' I never felt more humiliated. I arose a sadder, a wiser, and a dirtier man. Lochinvar made no resistance when I put him again at the fence. He never swerved an inch from my guidance."

That the Dean's keen sense of humour

is in some degree hereditary, may be gathered from the fatherly rebuke which greeted his return: "I don't know, Reynolds, whether you have brought the brush, but I never saw any one in greater need of it."

From hunting to shooting may seem merely a step, but in the eyes of many a sportsman the step is a descent from the sublime to the dull humdrum. The Dean owns fondness for his gun, although far less than for his horse; but he abhors "big shoots," and modern acts of game slaughter. Battues he abominates, not merely as poor sport, but as tempting men to crime through a plethora of pheasants. He has small sympathy for shooters who sit smoking in a ditch while waiting for a "drive," where they miss more than they hit, and wound birds without bagging them. He thinks little of the pastime, "half luncheon and half lounge," which begins late in the day, and ends in wholesale butchery to be paraded in the newspapers. He is firm in his belief that there was more joy to a sportsman over half a score of partridges, brought skilfully to bag with the help of a staunch pointer, than there can be over multitudes of tame birds bred in hencoops. He thinks, too, there is nothing in the memories of shooting men to equal first successes as a pleasurable remembrance.

Here the present writer may possibly be pardoned if he cites his own experience. While snipe-shooting one morning, "hard by his native shore," he flushed a duck and mallard, beyond reach of his small shot. Regretfully he saw them sail away to sea; and gave them up at last as being wholly lost to sight, although to memory dear. At length, however, after what seemed hours of anxious watching, back they flew serenely, and settled in a "fleet"* about a half-mile distant. The wind fortunately favouring, the shooter made a careful stalk; and by good luck up they rose, at the spot which he had marked, but where through the thick fringe of reeds they were invisible. Bang, bang, and down they dropped, and his young heart leaped with joy; and then, for want of a retriever, his young legs scampered off to fetch the boat-house key, which hung a mile or more away from him. . . . Two such phantoms of delight never gleamed upon his sight, as when, after a brief interval, he beheld that fated couple!

* Suffolk term for marsh-shallow, or little creek.

There, close to one another, and with scarce a feather ruffled; there, with the wintry sunbeams gliding their plump breasts; there, on the water cold and grey, lifeless, yet beautiful they lay; and thence were taken up tenderly and lifted with care into the boat. When his memory would recall a climax of beatitude, it still reverts with rapture to that first successful double shot at duck.

The Dean's schooldays began at Newark, and were chiefly memorable for his presence at the triumph of the Tory candidate, "young Mr. Gladstone," whom the school-boys cheered most lustily. At Oxford the Dean pursued his studies within the walls of Brasenose, and without them joined more gaily in the pursuit of the fox; being thereto tempted, he alleges, by "a siren in a black velvet cap and scarlet coat," who should have used a sea-horse when trotting to the meet.

His fellow-students there were of two classes: "the men who rode on the land, and the men who rowed on the water." But though a "bigoted dry Bob," the Dean was seen at Henley on the memorable occasion, in the summer of '43, when Oxford with but seven oars outrowed the Cambridge Eight. One of the Oxford crew had fainted just before the start; and, as a proxy was objected to, the race was rowed without him, and was won by half a length. "I never shall forget the roar of 'Bravo, Oxford!' which reached us as the boats came into view. . . . Had they been the Seven before Thebes, or the Seven Champions of Christendom, or the Seven Bishops who stepped out of their boat at the Tower, they could not have been cheered more heartily."

The Dean's profession lay in doubt between the Army and the Church, and the latter may be proud of so strong a member militant. Her soldiers, when he joined their ranks, were not well trained as they are now, and the strongholds whence they fought the devil and the flesh were terribly ill kept, and very poorly garrisoned. Here is his pretty picture of the Midland village church which he attended in his childhood:

"The altar was represented by a small rickety deal table, with a scanty covering of faded and patched green baize, on which were placed the overcoat, hat, and riding whip of the officiating minister—a Curate who lived five miles away and was only seen on Sundays—who made a vestry of the sacristy; and, sitting there

in a huge surplice, had a conversation with the sexton before the service began, and looked as though he were about to have his hair cut. The font was filled with coffin ropes, tinder-box and brimstone matches, candle-ends, etc. It was never used for baptism. Sparrows twittered and bats floated beneath the rotten timbers of the roof; while beetles, and moths, and all manner of flies found happy homes below. The damp walls represented in fresco 'a green and yellow melancholy,' which had a depressing influence upon the spirit; and the darkest and most dismal building of the parish was that called the House of God."

For such shameful desecration the clergy were no doubt in prime measure to blame; but censure also should be meted to the congregation. The power of the parson was below that of the Squire, and this is how the latter showed true Christian humility and meekness when attending public worship:

"Within twelve miles of my home, Zalmunna came regularly to church, followed by a footman carrying a prayer-book, which he reverently suspended by a silver chain round the neck of his master on his arrival in the family pew," where probably he alumbered soundly through at least the sermon, if not half the service, his prayer-book being chained to him in order to prevent its falling on the floor.

To cite the title-page of *Waverley*, "'Tis sixty years since" rural congregations saw such Church Parades as this. Happily our country gentlemen, although they may be somnolent, can carry their own prayer-books, and do not require a footman to chain them round their necks. Churches then were closed on weekdays, and religion bottled up for Sunday effervescence. When Dean Hole had power to do so, he threw his church doors open all throughout the year, and at the weekly cost of half-a-crown for the schooling of his choir-boys, he held a daily morning service in his church. Though few of his hard-working flock might find the leisure to attend, he believed that the church bell might in time bring them to pray—at home or in the fields, if not with him in the church. And his faith was always firm that, if human ears were few there, the daily services he held would have angelic audience.

To preachers, young or old, the Dean gives excellent advice in specially entreating them to follow his example, and learn

to preach extempore. "To read is not to preach," he very wisely says. "Preachers who would win souls must speak from the fulness of their own hearts." And he tells with simple earnestness how he first began in reality to preach. For want of light one evening, he was unable to read the sermon he had written. "In my brief but awful perplexity, the thought came to me, 'Surely you have some words for your Master'; and I prayed that I might speak them, remembering the promise, 'It shall be given unto you what ye shall say.' I repeated the text, without chapter or verse—forgotten; began to utter the thought which came into my mind; preached for the first time in my life." And he was told afterwards that his hearers had been much impressed by his sermon, and considered it by far the best that they had ever heard from him.

Encouraged by so good a start he bravely persevered, trusting to his memory for the due sequence of his sentences, prepared with all due care beforehand and stamped firmly on his thoughts. The spoken words might vary from those which had been written, but the substance rarely failed to be sufficiently expressed. Only twice in twenty years did words fail him in his need. Once when he had been travelling some four hundred miles, and had taken no food before entering the church. "I had not preached two minutes before it seemed as though the upper part of my head was petrified. I had just enough consciousness to tell my hearers that my memory failed, but that I was sure that God would come to my help, and then the stupor left me in a moment, and I preached without further interruption." Another time, when, being thoroughly exhausted by a long protracted series of journeyings and preachings, including a Church Congress, he began to speak to a great meeting of working-men at Leeds. He had scarce uttered three words when he "was seized with blank oblivion," having then unfortunately ceased to take his notes. Happily some music was included in the order of the meeting, and while the organ played the Dean remembered most of his lost speech.

To listen to a sermon, read with much monotony and little real earnestness, is not a very pleasant or profitable pastime, and we may feel a lurking sympathy for the dear old Suffolk dame—whom Charles Keene has pictured so delightfully—as she calmly told her Vicar, that when his words "do come a-treacling" to her between the

neighbours' bonnets, "that fare won'erful poor stuff!" As for learning sermons parrotwise, with no care to grasp their pith, the practice has its dangers, and likewise its defects. When a Scotch minister excused himself for preaching from a manuscript on the plea of a bad memory, the sage Elder rebuked him rather neatly by remarking: "Weel, then, meenister, if ye sae soon forget your own sarmons, ye'll nae blame us if we follow your lead."

In the matter of Church schooling, the Dean has many pleasant memories. He tells, for instance, how his sister once asked a Sunday scholar, "What was meant by the Law and the Prophets?" Whereupon she was answered promptly by a bright little girl, "If you please, ma'am, when you sell anybody up"; her small mind by sad experience having come to the conclusion that a sale by law resulted in some profits to the seller.

The Dean is wisely a strong advocate of short services for children. He finds large coloured prints a great help to keep young eyes and ears from shutting, and young limbs from fidgeting. When he established daily service at his church, he paid, as we have stated, half-a-crown a week for the teaching of his choir-boys. Whether the scholars greatly profited by their liberal education—for truly liberal it was, then, in those præ-School Board and high Tory times—may be viewed as problematical; if their progress may be judged with any fairness from the answer of a quick boy, who being asked, "What proof we had of Saint Peter's repentance?" replied forthwith, "Please, sir, he crowed three times."

Sunday schools and offertories are frequently connected, and as touching the latter the Dean has some good tales. He tells how Lady Cork was once so strongly moved by an appeal from the pulpit, that she borrowed a sovereign from Sydney Smith, who was sitting by her, and then lacked the courage to put it in the plate, or to return it to the lender. He relates, too, how a preacher once in Prairieland deputed a rough listener to collect the offerings. The first gift, being a quarter-dollar, was declined by the collector; who, producing his revolver, remarked with simple emphasis: "Boys, this here's a dollar show!" and then, with much alacrity, gathered as many dollars as there were persons present. Perhaps, however, the best story is that of a collection in the diocese of Lincoln. Here the Rector, seeing but one alms-plate, and a large

congregation, bade a rustic fetch a dessert-dish from the Rectory garden, where some guests had been lunching, and carry it for offerings through the north aisle of the church. In a little while the man returned, and whispered timidly: "I've taken it down yon side the aisle, and up t'other—they'll none on 'em have any." For the alms-gatherer had not been told to empty the dish, and in his simplicity had borne it up and down the church as he was bidden—and it was full of biscuits!

AT A FISHING INN.

IT stands some fifty feet above the sea level at the end of a long winding salt water loch, the shores of which are clothed to a point high up on the rugged slopes with birch and fir, and even more delicate bosage, which grows luxuriantly enough to show that, in this happy valley, the rigours of the northern winter must be considerably abated. Quite at the extremity, where the hills come close together, the river, after winding some half mile or so through the flat of accumulated débris which it has brought down from the mountains, finds its way into the loch, and this particular spot, though it is to a lover of the picturesque the least attractive of the landscape, is one of note and consideration. It is the *raison d'être* of many things, one of which must suffice for present consideration, and this one is the well-known fishing inn of Strathbogie. Through the river's narrow mouth—when the rain upon the moors has set all the burns running, and has filled from bank to bank the stream which yesterday was a narrow runlet, brawling along amongst rocks and shoals of rounded pebbles—the salmon, sensible of the rush of fresh water against their noses, turn them landward, and force their way through the first windings of the stream towards Lower Brig pool, and the Manse pool, and Dumbuck pool, and other pools too numerous to mention.

There has been a long drought. It must be understood that the term "drought" is here used as the fisherman interprets it. During the past week showers have fallen plentifully, showers which would have passed for heavy rain in other regions—and for days at a time the hills have been hidden, and the loch veiled in a clammy mist which wetted one's jacket as effectually as need be; but all such pluvial phenomena rank as drought

in the eyes of the fisherman. They do not fill the river; and if the days of Noah were to return without accomplishing this feat, the fisherman would still declare that there was drought in the land. In Strathbogie his temper of late has been a little wearing to those with whom he has come in contact; and there, though they may know nothing and care less about fishing, they begin to long for the rain and the consequent spate as ardently as he does himself, knowing that, when it does come, they will have more of his room and less of his company. He has been heard to use indictable language to an unlucky tourist who rejoiced in his presence at the continuance of what he was pleased to call fine weather, to wit, hot sun, and a windless, cloudless sky; and to bid him get away to Margate or Southend. But now at last, the rain has come; and, after a day and a half of it, the river is rushing along under the bridge, swift and full, richly-coloured by the peaty bed through which it has filtered. Donald has just come in to say that a particular rock, which has not been covered for the last two seasons, is now invisible; and that if the rain stops before nightfall—and it already shows signs of abating—the stream will be in first-rate condition for to-morrow, and that there will be more "sawmon" about than they will know what to do with.

There is large consumption of whisky and tobacco in the smoking-room that evening, and lengthy debate on the one topic to which the denizens of Strathbogie can be induced to give any attention at present. Men talk as if they would never stop about "Jock Scotts," large and small, and "March browns," and "Heck'ems," and other strangely-named flies. A general election might be going on, or we might be in the throes of some social or industrial crisis, and they would still go on talking about these flies, and of other lures and engines for the entrapping of salmon and trout. There is a story that, in 1870, two Frenchmen were fishing for gudgeon on the Paris quays that night in July when the shout "*à Berlin*" was heard in the streets; they fished on steadily through the disaster and defeat on the eastern frontier; through the roar and turmoil of the German leaguer; through the lurid horror of the Commune and the second siege; and when the Versailles troops entered the burning city, they found our two anglers fishing for—but not of necessity catching—gudgeon. I was once

sceptical as to the truth of this history, but after a sojourn in Strathbogie inn I can readily believe it.

There will also be much speculation as to whether the fish will make a rush at once for the upper water, or lie for a little in the lower pools till the spate shall have moderated a bit. Each man will have his own private belief on this point, but this belief will not be given to the world. Most carefully will he weigh and choose his words so that they may do anything rather than reveal his inward thoughts. Should there happen to be in the company an old piscatorial hand, he will probably try to rival, in ambiguous speech, that diplomatist spoken of by Talleyrand as so insincere that one could not believe the opposite of what he said. The old hand will have settled with himself which will be the best pool for a big fish to-morrow, and he means, by hook or by crook, to have the first cast over it. If the man sitting in the next chair to him should happen to be his dearest friend, the benefactor of his youth, and the architect of his fortune, he would not make him the sharer of his secret. Nothing would induce him to go so far as this; though he might back a bill for him, or lend him an umbrella. Like all over crafty men, he is over suspicious as well, and he has a lurking fear that more than one of the men around him may have fixed upon that same pool as the objective of to-morrow's sport. He furtively chuckles and blesses his stars that he brought with him an alarm clock. This he will set for five o'clock in the morning. The last thing to-night he will settle matters with his gillie, and give orders for his breakfast, and he will be "brushing with hasty steps the dews away," as he tramps up the valley, long before the other fishermen are sleepily answering Janet's uncertain summons at their bedroom doors to arise and breakfast.

But though the old hand may have stolen a march upon them, there will be much parade of preparation amongst these belated sportsmen on the morrow, and hope will ride high as they sally forth, each with his own particular cast, prepared for his own particular pool. There are some cynics who declare that the complicated elaboration of a man's apparatus often goes in inverse ratio with his skill as an angler. Certain it is that the men who carry the largest fly hooks often come back with very light baskets of spoil, but with mouths full of apology and explanation how

it was that they failed, when they join the gathering of ladies and non-fishing men, assembled about six o'clock round the door of the inn to hear the earliest news of the day's sport. The river, according to Johnson, was too full; while Thompson opines that they got at it just two hours too late. Both agree that the wind had a point too much of the north in it, and differ from Robinson, who rather likes a north wind, and attributes all his ill-luck to the leaden greyness of the sky. To listen to all their explanations concerning the humours of a fishing river, suggests a comparison with the ripening of a pear. It seems just as difficult to hit upon the right moment to fish the one as to eat the other. At dinner and in the smoking-room these unsuccessful ones will have to take back seats and give way to the fishermen who have scored; and late in the evening, when they have been almost maddened by reiterated accounts of their rivals' triumphs, and perhaps a little inflamed by an extra allowance of the Talisker, they will colloquy together in dark conclave, and hint that after all Smith got both his fish with worms, and that Jones snatched that fifteen-pounder of his with a rake hook, having struck him much nearer to the tail than the head.

The talk at places like Strathbogie, at breakfast, lunch, or dinner, or in any corner where two or more may foregather, will be found severely special. Its tone may be described as piscatory, and more piscatory, and still more piscatory. Any outsider, or any so-called fisherman who pursues his art in such a half-hearted fashion as to want to talk and think about other matters when he is not holding his rod in his hand, will have to look out sharp for an opportunity if he wants to introduce a subject bearing on aught else besides fish and how to catch them; and supposing that he should succeed in his attempt, the odds are heavy that he will find himself, after the exchange of a few alien words, listening to a thrilling tale as to how a particular fish was hooked, and played, and landed two years ago, and the topic which he lugged in by the head and shoulders ignominiously thrust aside.

"The gentle art" is such a respectable, well-authenticated phrase, and one, moreover, which has been celebrated by so many illustrious pens, that it may seem rash, and even ungracious, to hint that certain of its most enthusiastic professors may show themselves now and then to be a little wanting in gentleness and urbanity.

The luggage of new-comers to a fishing inn is narrowly scanned; and if it should include a bundle of rods, remarks of an uncomplimentary nature, scarcely to be construed as anything like a welcome, are often dropped, heedless whether they reach the ears of the intrusive strangers or no. At some hostelrys there are traditions of positive pressure having been brought to bear upon the landlord by gentry of this sort to refuse admission to new-comers who might look like spoiling the monopoly. They will scowl truculently at any new-comers—whether they may appear to be fishermen or not—and they make no concealment of their contempt for tourists. "Cook's tourists" they call them when they want to be very crushing; poor-spirited creatures who can find pleasure in wandering along the banks of a Highland stream, and taking in through the eye the rare charm of its loveliness without ever craving to ensnare the fish that swim therein. But in certain of them there is enough of the serpent's wisdom to make them treat a fellow of this sort—one who never has caught, and probably never will catch a fish—with much greater courtesy than the man who arrives with an imposing array of tackle, and begins at once to ask questions as to the best fly for these parts, and the most likely pools on the river.

It is a nuisance, no doubt, to have him hanging about the inn; but at least he occupies a bedroom which, were he to move on to another place, might be filled by a rival and experienced votary of the rod. Perhaps he is making believe to do literary work, or to paint in water-colours, and one in such case is quite harmless. He may even be an angling neophyte without doing any great damage, if he be only handled aright. The veteran habitué, if he be wise, will manifest a kindly interest in the beginner's efforts, and be generous of advice; and, having established relations of quasi intimacy, ought not to have any difficulty in daily despatching his pupil to fish a certain pool in the river where salmon take more freely than they do anywhere else, or to start off to a loch some three miles off and a thousand feet high to try for the famous brown trout, which are fabled to haunt its waters, but which few anglers have ever seen.

In common fairness, it must be added that types like the above-named are comparatively rare. They exist amongst anglers as they do in every set of men

keenly bent either on business or pleasure. It would be an abuse of the term to call them sportsmen; they are nothing better than selfish churls who would always try to monopolise the benefits of whatever position they might occupy. The angler is a capital fellow as a rule, and if he does talk angling shop pretty severely during his holiday on the lochs and rivers, is he alone in this infirmity? Does not the alpine climber occasionally let drop remarks about crevasses and moraines and arêtes? Do lawyers and doctors and parsons in their foregatherings leave all thought of their several professions behind in the professional precincts? And lastly, has not a new terror just risen in our midst—one who talks shop as it has never been talked before—to wit, the golfer? Any man who takes his pastime as seriously as the angler of the right sort takes his, is bound to let it hold the chief place as a subject of thought and discourse. Men of this sort have always been prone to use what we will here call diplomatic reticences, and it must be confessed that, as anglers, they occasionally put in practice methods such as moral purists, from their own narrow standpoint, might with justice condemn. But it should be remembered that Warren Hastings used a very free hand in building up an empire, and Nelson is reported by some to have sailed very near the wind in his successful struggle to preserve one. What wonder is there, then, that an angler, who knows the tricks and manners of the baser sort above described, should now and then follow these illustrious examples, when a coup of this kind may seem necessary to ensure the capture of that twenty-pound salmon to his own rod instead of letting it fall to the wiles of a fellow who, as likely as not, would sell it for what it would fetch, if no one happened to be by?

FOR ANGELE'S SAKE.

A STORY IN THREE PARTS.

PART III.

FROM Franz there came no further sign of life until I wrote to say that the date of my summer holiday was fixed, and that I hoped soon to have the pleasure of seeing him in his new home. I supposed, I added, that he had been too much engrossed by his new happiness to answer my last letter. His reply to this was

longer in reaching me than I had expected it to be. When at last it came, I saw the reason before I opened it. The postmark was Linthal.

"DEAR MONSIEUR JEAN," it ran, "they sent your letter on to me here. I have left the Jorat, and am back among my own people. It was not for the reason you fancy that I have been silent. There have been changes of which I could not write to you, though I should like to see you and tell you all that has happened. If you come to Linthal I am always to be heard of from Zweifel, at the 'Hôtel zur Post.' Yours faithfully,
"F. LEHMANN."

I read and re-read the letter, but I felt that there was more between the lines than I could guess at. Had his marriage been broken off, or had his prospects as a successful wood-carver suddenly collapsed? My interest in him was as warm as ever. I felt quite eager to hear the causes which had led to such an alteration of his programme.

So to Linthal I made my way direct, and, arriving there one July evening, took the omnibus from the railway to the "Hôtel zur Post."

The host was a cheery, garrulous personage. He had much to say in answer to my enquiries after Franz Lehmann.

"Know him," he cried, "I should just think so. I've known him since he was as high as yon chair-seat; a real brave garçon. So monsieur is not a stranger to Linthal."

I explained that I had made Lehmann's acquaintance in the Pays de Vaud.

"Ah," he rejoined, "what a freak that was of his—one of the best guides in the neighbourhood—we thought he had deserted us for good and all. There was great rejoicing when he came back. It didn't suit him down there. He couldn't expect it would. He came back looking the ghost of his old self. But he's pulling round now, and if monsieur means to do any climbing he can't do better than engage him. I recommend him to every one. I suggested him to an Englishman the other day, but he didn't take my advice. He asked who else there was; he gave himself airs of being a seasoned climber. He went off and found a guide for himself."

As he chatted, he fetched the hotel register for me to inscribe my name.

"This is the gentleman, monsieur," he

said, pointing to an entry a page or so back. "He is the only Englishman besides yourself who has been here yet this season; but they will be coming now. The good climbers love our valley and our Alps. This one has never been here before; but he talks as if he were a great climber. Perhaps he is; but he would have done well to take Franz Lehmann with him, especially when I recommended him so strongly. It quite astonished me."

So it did me, for the name to which my communicative host was directing my attention was the name of my cousin, Eustace Ferrier.

"It's all the better for me," I said; "I shall be able to secure Lehmann's services."

I sent a message to Franz, and half an hour later, as I sat after dinner in the garden of the hotel, he was announced. The flush of the sunset fell on his face as I greeted him. Mine host was right. He had changed considerably. There were lines about his eyes and in his broad forehead; his face looked sadder and older.

"It seems I have a lucky chance in finding you, Franz," I said.

"I have been waiting for you, Monsieur Jean," he replied. "I should not have undertaken any long excursion while I was expecting you."

"Well, sit down, Franz," I said, "we will have a fresh bottle of wine, and let me hear the history of all these changes."

He seated himself, and the wine was brought; but he only made some remark on my journey. It was evidently a little difficult for him to begin to speak of himself.

"I cannot tell you what I think of your panels, Franz," I said by way of a start, "for I have not seen them. I hope, however, they brought you in further orders."

His face darkened.

"They have not, Monsieur Jean," he replied, "but I do not care; I have given up wood-carving."

Then there was another pause; the sunset glowed and faded and glowed again on the white peaks far to the west, and a crescent moon hung above them like a fairy boat.

"It is a beautiful country, Monsieur Jean," he said abruptly; "who can wonder that I have returned to my own mountains?"

"But your other plan, Franz," I asked. "How does Angèle like your return here?"

"Angèle has no word in it," he replied; "it is all the same to her if I am here or there."

"Do you mean——" I began, but I hesitated. I hardly knew how to frame the question.

"It is all the same to her," he went on, "because—Angèle is dead, Monsieur Jean," he said piteously; "but had she lived it would have been all the same. I should have left her and come back."

He paused. I pitied him with all my heart. He had evidently found out his great mistake.

"You would never have thought," he began again, "that Angèle could be false to her word. Myself I do not count her false, and I do not lay the fault to her door. She was so innocent; she was led away through that. There is no anger in my heart against her. But—but, when I think of him, ah, then——"

He stopped and looked at me.

"Who was he?" I asked, an ominous misgiving at my heart.

"Who was he?" he repeated, looking at me very hard. "I will not tell you who he was. When I have had my revenge all the world shall know; till then I shall keep my own secret. He was a man who came and played with her heart, and stole her love, and robbed her of her good name, just as a child might break a flower from the hedge and throw it away a minute after; then he went away, and she, when she found herself deceived, betrayed, abandoned, what could she do? She wrote me a letter, and told me the whole story—no one else knew a word of it, and she bade me, when I had read it, come and look for her far up the stream at a pool we both knew of. She wanted me to forgive her, she said. I went in haste, but I did not find her. As I waited I saw there were fresh footsteps down to the water's edge. Then I knew what she meant." He stopped again. I felt sure that now I knew why Eustace had refused Franz's services as guide, but I did not speak. "We buried her," Franz continued, "at Montherond, in the corner of the churchyard which is not consecrated. No one said a prayer over her—I could not—but, as I stood by her grave, I took a vow—a vow, Monsieur Jean."

The moon had followed the sunset; the mountains were pale and deathly.

"Franz," I said, "is it possible that I know the man of whom you are talking?"

"That I will not say," he replied. "But even if you do, no warning will save him. I vowed to take his life as he took hers. He shall pay the price. Her blood is on

his head, but no law can touch him. I shall be the law to him."

"Franz!" I cried, horrified, "what are you saying? Surely you would not—could not be a murderer! Heaven will judge him, though men leave him unpunished."

"Heaven has judged him," he answered solemnly, "and I am only the minister of Heaven's justice."

"The minister of Heaven's justice!" I protested. "If you lie in wait for a fellow-man and take his life——"

"I shall not lie in wait for him," he replied resolutely. "I will tell you how it will be. Heaven will deliver him into my hands. At first, in the first agony, I felt that I must rush off to seek him there and then, and slay him where I found him; but as the earth fell on her coffin, as clod after clod shut her down away from me for ever, my wrath grew duller and less eager, and a voice came to me saying that I must not hasten to revenge myself, that if I waited he would be given into my hand—given so that he could expect no mercy—some day. For that day I am waiting. Sometimes it seems very near, sometimes it seems very far, but it is coming, and then I shall kill him, for Angèle's sake, Monsieur Jean."

"But, Franz," I cried, "why do you tell me this? Do you not know I shall do all in my power to prevent your carrying out this terrible project?"

"I had a feeling I must tell you," he replied simply, "but you cannot prevent me. What could you do to avert Heaven's justice? I shall never seek him, monsieur, I do not know where he is, I shall never ask; I shall never breathe his name. You can do nothing to avert his fate."

"Franz," I pleaded, "I think Angèle would rather you forgave him."

"She did not say so," he replied.

There was one thing I could do, I could take Franz away out of Linthal for the next few days. My suspicion might not be true, Eustace might not be the man who had ruined Franz's happiness and incurred his vengeance, but in any case I would do what I could to prevent the two meeting.

"Franz," I said, after we had both sat silent for a few moments, "you know that I am no mountaineer, but now that I have come to Linthal I should like to make some sort of an attempt at a climb. You remember how you used to kindle my enthusiasm at La Gaultette."

Franz's face lighted up.

"Ah, Monsieur Jean," he cried, "that was what I wanted, to show you something of my country, though I would have you bear in mind that our Alps are not exactly the mountains for a novice. Still, there are many things worth seeing that I can show you."

Before we parted we had arranged to start up the valley at five o'clock the next morning. Our excursion was to last three or four days; when we returned Eustace would be already far away—at least, if a warning from me would be of any avail. It took me a long while to write a letter to him that night. It was by no means easy to speak of the suspicion which had seized upon me; but at last I finished it, and confided it to the talkative landlord, to await the return of Eustace.

The next morning, before the sun had climbed above the row of mighty peaks on the eastern sky, Franz and I, with our knapsacks and all the other requisites for our excursion, had left Linthal behind us, and were following the brawling, eddying Linth up to the mountains in which it rose. Franz's mood had quite changed. The scene of the night before seemed almost like a dream, and he the Franz of a year ago, as he marched cheerily along, calling my attention first in one direction, then in another; naming each summit, each glacier, each pass, each scarf of pine-wood that draped the mountain slopes. Then there were stories to tell; every mountain torrent, every chasm, every dazzling snowfield had its romance, its tales of adventure, or its tragedy. We walked on all day with intervals of rest, the scenery with every mile growing grander, wilder, and more solitary. Our way lay now along a bold spur of the Alps, which ascended gradually, and which commanded a magnificent panorama of the valley we had left behind, and of the mountains which closed it in. Here and there the path ran beside a deep chasm, in which far below we heard the melted snow roaring impatiently along on its way to the mighty Rhine.

"In the winter," said Franz, "these rifts are almost dry, and then charcoal-burners and hunters grope their way along them at the peril of their lives. I have often been myself, and once I found the bones of a man who had fallen over—Heaven knows how many years before—his skeleton was lodged in a cleft, and the summer floods had not been able to wash it away."

The day wore on to late afternoon; Franz had determined on reaching a certain Sennhütte in time for supper. There he meant to camp. We were hurrying to enable us to carry out this plan, and had been walking in silence for some time, when a long, peculiar kind of jodel sounded from the distance, and Franz stood suddenly still. The cry was repeated, and he answered it.

"What is it?" I asked.

"It is Moritz Stantz," he replied; "he is a guide on these mountains. He is signalling for help. It may be a question of life and death. He is up yonder. I must hurry on, and you, Monsieur Jean, will be safe if you follow this path; or better still, I will return to you here."

Then, scarcely waiting for my answer, he threw down his packages and disappeared at a break-neck pace in the direction of the cries which continued. I did not feel inclined to remain there inactive. I had heard too many stories of peril and disaster that day to wait quietly until his return. I followed him, making the best of the rough pathway he had taken. When I saw him again he was about a hundred yards or so ahead of me, in earnest conversation with another man. The two were at the foot of a grassy slope, which appeared to end abruptly. There were one or two boulders of rock standing up between the margin of the grass and the opal-coloured sky. The two drew cautiously near one of these boulders and looked over. I heard them call. Then they stood up; there was another moment of discussion, after which Franz took a rope, put it under his own armpits, and I saw the other guide retreat to a safe distance from the edge of the precipice and prepare to lower him. Some one had evidently fallen over, and Franz had gone to the rescue. By the time I was within speaking distance, Stantz had ceased to pay out the rope, and was trying to find some means of anchoring it.

"Ah!" he cried as I appeared, "*à la bonne heure!* There is nothing here to which I can tie this sacré rope. There is an Englishman down over the cliff—an Englishman from the Hôtel Post; such a splendid climber, too. Will you go down, cautiously—ah, very cautiously—and balancing yourself against that boulder, look over and give me the signal when to pull up? He is badly hurt, but we shall save him, I hope."

I needed no second bidding. An English-

man from the Hôtel zur Post! I scarcely heeded the caution. In a second I was clinging to the boulder, straining my eyes into the chasm which lay below. Before I could distinguish them in the dusky light I heard their voices clearly.

"She is dead," Franz was saying. "You are her murderer; you must die!"

Then Eustace's voice, weak and pleading. I could not catch all he said, but Franz's answer came short and stern.

"I have not sought you," he said; "you have been delivered into my hands."

I saw that Eustace was clinging with all his strength to a small tree which projected from the rock; it was this which had arrested his fall. I saw Franz seize his hands to loosen his hold.

"Franz!" I shouted, throwing up my arms.

The other guide began to pull in the rope. Franz gave one look upwards, saw me, and then rapidly loosened the knot by which the rope was attached. It flew up with a jerk.

"You told me they were ready!" cried Eustace's guide angrily, lowering the rope again. I saw Eustace try to snatch at it, but his right arm fell disabled.

"Ab, Franz," he implored, "have you no mercy?—and life is so sweet."

"Life sweet?" repeated Franz, as he took the rope again. "Do you find it sweet?"

"Do not we all find it sweet?" was the reply.

I breathed more freely; Franz was passing the rope round Ferrier's body.

"I should have thought," he said, "that life would have been a burden to you after—after that. You shall have it, since you can still find it precious enough to plead for."

I raised my arm again, and this time Eustace swung slowly upwards, Franz clinging to the tree and guiding his ascent with his alpenstock. Then he raised his eyes to me.

"I have not forgiven him, Monsieur Jean, and I should never forgive myself that I have failed in my duty to her." Then he looked down into the dim abyss beneath him. "There is only one thing I can do now."

The next moment he had loosed his hold—there was a clatter of falling stones,

nothing more—the roaring of the swollen water overpowered any other sound.

When I looked round, horror-stricken, Stautz was disengaging the rope from the fainting form of the rescued man.

"Now for friend Franz," he cried cheerily. "Ah, it was a brave rescue!"

Then I told him, as best I could, that Franz had done his last brave deed in this world.

They searched for his body long, and at great risk, for he was greatly respected and admired in the whole district, and I waited at Linthal in hopes of following him to his burial, but all in vain—no trace of him was ever found.

Since that day I have never seen Eustace Ferrier. He married his American heiress, and they spend their time in the places approved of by those who live for pleasure.

Rachel has had one or two good offers, but she remains single.

"I believe she has never cared for any one as she did for Eustace Ferrier," says my mother plaintively, "but I don't think it is a good thing for cousins to marry in any case."

"In any case it is a good thing that she did not marry Eustace Ferrier," I reply; and to myself I add, "for Angèle's sake."

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MISS LATIMER OF BRYANS.

BY ELEANOR C. PRICE.

Author of "Alexia," "Red Towers," "The Little One," etc.

CHAPTER XXXI. BEFORE THE BALL.

It was a strange experience for Porphyria. The background of her mind, generally so full of daylight, had a shadow in it now of discomfort, almost of pain; and the oddest part of this was, that Geoffrey Thorne's suddenly revealed feeling took a place generally reserved to the great troubles and joys of life; she felt that she had known about it always. At first, therefore, she appeared to herself in rather a hideous light of misunderstanding and cruelty. But her mind was too honest to submit to such self-accusation as this. She had not known. Geoffrey's friendship and admiration had, of course, belonged to her always; she could not remember the time when she did not possess and value these—but more than these, no! If she had ever suspected what he had silently and miserably confessed that afternoon, was it likely that she would have treated him so frankly and unconsciously, have asked him to come home to Bryans, have occupied herself with his future?

And that future! If Geoffrey had committed no sin beyond a too ambitious love, he might easily have been forgiven. She would only have been sorry for him; no woman could be angry with him for that. But what right or reason had he to offer Maggie what was not his own? No wonder that neither of them looked very happy. Maggie appeared to her friend in the light of an injured person. It seemed to Miss Latimer that Geoffrey Thorne had

done an unpardonable thing in asking a girl to marry him, while, in plain English, he was in love with somebody else. If some men had done it, there would at least have been no ground for surprise. Maggie, with her beauty and her money, might have been considered a good match by any one; but from Geoffrey, somehow, one expected better things than a mercenary, made-up marriage.

The more Poppy thought of it, the more angry she became. That Maggie should be sacrificed to a disappointed man, by way of pleasing her grandfather and doing well for the Thorne family—it was indeed a different fate from what Poppy had intended for her. Now she knew why the engagement, for which she had hoped and even planned a little, had been from the first a vague disappointment. Whether anything could be done, she did not know; but she lay awake a long time that night thinking about it, and came down the next morning a little pale, and not quite as calmly handsome as usual.

The sight of Arthur, the duty of entertaining her guests, the hundred things that came to occupy her, made it necessary that this trouble should be put aside for the present, and it remained in the background of her mind, nothing but a shadow, making any perfect enjoyment, however, impossible for Poppy. Her eyes rested a little wistfully sometimes on Arthur, both in the evening and through that next day. His spirits were almost too high; he was even a little noisy. His face looked thinner, with a bright touch of unusual colour; his sleepy eyes had a new light in them. Sometimes he coughed, and then his mother frowned and bit her lips. The truth was that she had arrived at Bryans in the evening, with Otto and Alice,

extremely angry with Arthur. He had not been well; she had made arrangements for a specially comfortable journey for him, and was uneasy at his leaving London at all in such weather, to travel down into a bleak country where the snow lay deep. Then he had coolly left the house alone, early in the day, leaving a message to say that he had gone down by the midday train to Bryans.

"Not in love with Poppy? Nonsense! He is ridiculously in love with her. Can't wait to travel decently down with us," she said indignantly to Otto. "And I dare say he won't think of telegraphing for the carriage. He will walk up from the station through snow three feet deep. You laugh, do you? We shall none of us laugh if he has a serious illness."

"I agree with Alice's old sentiment," said Otto quietly. "I shall be glad when Arthur is married and done for."

"I hope it doesn't mean any more of that foolery," he said to his wife when they were alone.

There seemed, however, nothing to show that Arthur had not walked straight from the station to Bryans Court. This was quite enough for Mrs. Nugent, who knew nothing of a greater danger than snow-drifts between the Court and the station. For once she could not control herself, and spoke very sharply to Arthur about his unpardonable rashness. Otto and Alice were in the room. Arthur coloured up and laughed, but answered angrily:

"Look here, mother, if I am so ill that I can't take a walk in winter, I think this affair had better be broken off at once. Go and tell Poppy so, if you like."

"Arthur!"

"I mean it. There's nothing but worry and fuss, and life is not worth living."

He started up and left the room.

"I am certain he has a cold, a feverish cold," said Mrs. Nugent. "He behaves like a baby. I am very angry with him."

She was not even pacified when she saw him laughing with Poppy in the ball-room, and heard him begging Miss Fanny Latimer, in his most amiable and affectionate tones, to give him the first waltz to-morrow.

Several visitors arrived in the early part of the next day. Outside, the world was as wintry as ever, though the snowstorm had stopped. Two or three of Arthur's friends came down for the ball, and a few girls and young men who were friends or distant cousins of the Latimers. There

was no time for any one in the house, not even the Nugents, who were at home there, to think much of their own affairs. That sort of idle bustle reigned which to some men and women is more tiresome than anything in the world. Most of the people arrived in time for luncheon, and all the younger ones went out in the afternoon. Some tried skating on the frozen river; Otto and two or three men took their guns and went off with the keeper. Alice was among the skaters. She came skimming down to the bridge, and saw Poppy, who had walked down with them, standing alone under the great leafless trees in the avenue.

"Where's Arthur?" she called out; "I thought he was with you."

"He has just gone to ask how Mr. Farrant is to-day," Poppy answered.

Her manner and tone were a little grave. Alice stared, then took her skates off and joined her where the snow had been swept off the road.

"Why?" she said.

"Why?" repeated Poppy. "What do you mean?"

"Why has he gone? Did you send him?"

"Old Mr. Farrant has been very ill, you know, and I have been half afraid that Maggie would not be able to come to-night. But she is coming, I hope. Arthur has gone to see if it is all right."

"Why did you not go with him?"

"Well!" Poppy looked at her and smiled. She was not often called upon to invent reasons for her doings. However, this time there were two reasons, and there really was no dishonesty in not telling Alice that she wished to avoid a possible meeting with Geoffrey Thorne.

"I could not leave you all very well," she said.

"Dear thing, you are much too polite," Alice laughed in answer. "By-the-bye, how is that engagement going on—the artist and the beauty?"

"Just the same," said Poppy.

There was a certain dreariness in her tone, and she began suddenly to walk up and down. Alice, too, felt that it was too cold to stand still, and hurried along by her side, asking more questions; they were now about the dance and the people who were coming to it. Poppy answered them fully and frankly.

The others skated away down the river, past Mr. Farrant's garden, through the Rector's field. The short afternoon was

closing, a rosy twilight—for the sky had cleared—was beginning to shine over the snow, before Arthur came back from his mission. Poppy and her friends had nearly reached the house on their way home to tea. Alice looked up sharply as he overtook them. He did not return her glance, but walked quietly beside Poppy and said to her :

"Yes, she's coming. I saw her. Nobody else was there. She took me up to see the old man. His illness has not improved his temper. Poor girl! I'm sorry for her. But he praised his future son-in-law up to the skies."

"Yes—he is good," said Poppy, in a low, half questioning tone. "Yes. Poor Maggie!"

Among all the people, young or old, who were assembled at Bryans Court that day, the happiest was Miss Fanny Latimer. No uncertainties, no hopes and fears and complications, were there to disturb her peace. She could look forward, if not to a lifetime, like these younger ones, yet to some years to be spent with a dear friend who loved her sincerely, whose admiration was not affected by passing time, and in whom her trust was absolute and unclouded. Such happiness as this could hardly be shadowed by the fact which in former days would have troubled her, that her beloved Mrs. Nugent had come to Bryans in a bad temper, hardly to be altogether explained by Arthur's rebelliousness.

Mrs. Nugent in truth looked on Fanny's engagement rather in the light of an injury to herself. Fanny was a useful friend. She had never particularly liked or understood Mr. Cantillon. She thought him a little tiresome, a little absurd, with his enthusiasm and his fancies. She could not deny that it would be a happy marriage, but she was a little scornful of Fanny for making it all the same. She probably felt that Mr. Cantillon did not like her. Fortunately, however, Fanny's affection for him was far too deep to be troubled by any small secret darts of the enemy, and Mrs. Nugent, of course, could make no open opposition.

Nothing really troubled Miss Latimer, therefore, as she stood by her bedroom fire before going down to dinner that evening, in a lovely new gown of black and gold. Her small, pretty figure was set off to the best advantage; her fair hair, only a little grey, was dressed most becomingly. After

her maid had left the room, she had stood for several minutes before a long glass, looking at herself with a smile. The conviction of looking both pretty and young is pleasant at any age, especially when one feels certain of admiration from one person at least. Fanny walked slowly to the fire, with the smile of pleasant expectation still upon her lips.

A few people were coming to dinner, Mr. Cantillon, of course, among them. He had promised to be early, and Fanny was now listening for his familiar ring. She would then go downstairs and meet him in the hall, and they had arranged for a few minutes' talk in the library before it was necessary to join the other people in the drawing-room. Therefore she was ready in good time, and no girl who was coming to the Bryans ball that evening bore a lighter heart.

"I wonder if Poppy is ready?" thought the little lady as she stood by her fire. "I may as well go and see."

At that moment there was a knock at the door.

"Come in," said Miss Latimer.

The door was opened slowly and cautiously.

"Who is it? Oh, come in, Arch. Do you want me?"

Mrs. Arch stepped forward into the room, looking round her with an air of anxious secrecy which amused Miss Latimer.

"You are alone, ma'am? Can I speak to you, if you please?"

"Certainly. Shut the door. What is it?"

Fanny now remembered that the house-keeper had gone about all day with an unusually long face. Something had evidently been very wrong; but as the excellent Arch was subject to periodical fits of gloom, during which no one in the house could do right, the matter troubled her little, and she had not thought of enquiring into it. Even now she only thought that if any of the younger servants had to be sent away, Mrs. Arch might as well have kept back her complaint till to-morrow morning.

"I have been greatly put about, if you please, ma'am," said Mrs. Arch, "and it's been long before I could decide what was my duty. If it had been the first time that such talk reached my ears, I should ha' put it on one side as a pack of rubbish—and so I did the first time. And even now I've silenced them—and they understand that if I hear a word more, there'll

be changes before long, and some folks may find themselves out of work at an awkward time of year. For I'll have no gossips and scandal-mongers coming about my kitchen and hall. But still, it seems to me as things are going rather far, and I can't agree with my conscience to leave you ignorant. I did think of speaking to the Rector, but there are cases where the best of men don't so clearly see their way, and so——"

"Is it a long story?" said Miss Latimer, glancing at her little clock.

Mrs. Arch looked the picture of gloom as she stood there, looking down at the floor and twisting her hands together. When she once began, she was a woman of many words, and it was not easy to disentangle her meaning with any quickness. Neither was she clever at catching opportune moments. Miss Latimer felt quite sure that all this preluded a serious complaint of a new kitchen-maid, a girl in whom Poppy had interested herself, and who had been engaged by her wish, though Mrs. Arch thought her too pretty, and distrusted her from the first. It seemed more ridiculous every moment, five minutes before dinner on the night of the ball, that Mrs. Arch should have chosen such a time for her household matters.

"I suppose it is about Annie Kent?" said Fanny a little impatiently.

Mrs. Arch lifted her head and stared.

"Annie Kent, Miss Frances? I beg your pardon."

"Well, who is it, then?"

Suddenly Miss Latimer was frightened. Mrs. Arch, as she looked up, was quite pale, and her eyes were round with horror. Her face said, though she did not use the words: "Are you so mad, so blind, as not to see that something of real importance has brought me here at such a time?"

Fanny Latimer felt herself turning pale, too; the room seemed suddenly colder; she became conscious that Mrs. Arch had something dreadful to tell her—something which was hanging over her head—over all their heads. She sat down quietly and feebly in a low chair. She forgot her pretty dress, and the look of youth and pleasure died out of her face.

"Arch," she said, in a strange, hurried voice, "why do you frighten me like this? Put some coals on, please; it is so dreadfully cold. There, sit down in that chair and tell me what you mean—at once—there's no time. I must go down directly."

"I think you should have your eyes open to-night, Miss Frances; and that's why I tell you," said Mrs. Arch with extreme gravity; and then she began her story.

In consequence of this delay Mr. Cantillon arrived, lingered in the hall, looked into the library, and found Miss Fanny Latimer nowhere. The drawing-room was empty; he warmed himself at its glorious fire, and hoped that Fanny might be the first person to come down. He looked round, and thought, with a tender smile, how well it was that Fanny had not had her way with this pleasant old room. Somehow, any original look of dulness and stiffness had deserted it now; perhaps with the retreat of the illustrated books and a few immense vases. The pictures still enthroned there looked down quite happily on certain modern books and comfortable chairs which had made their way in. Glowing in evening light, Poppy's drawing-room was full of a kind of homely luxuriousness. Her grandmother would have been at home there, and the remark of the youngest and most artistic visitor was, "What a jolly room!"

The first person to come down was not Fanny Latimer, but Porphyria, all in white. Mr. Cantillon welcomed her as "next best," and for a few minutes they talked happily by the fire.

"So I hear my friend Geoffrey is not coming to-night," said the Rector.

Poppy did not answer for a moment; her face was shadowed by her fan.

"No," she said quietly. "He is going to take care of Mr. Farrant."

"Very amiable of him. I hope Maggie will miss him. But I think she will. I think she appreciates him—more than I quite expected."

"You think they are happy?"

Mr. Cantillon stared a little, but he could only clearly see the top of her fair shining head.

"Why not, Porphyria? I have no reason to think otherwise; have you?"

"I wonder why he asked her to marry him!"

Mr. Cantillon stared still more, and made a little face.

"For the usual reason, we must suppose," he said. "But the complete knowledge of motives, my dear—that is a science in itself."

"But what is the usual reason?"

Then Mr. Cantillon smiled.

How much further the subject would

have been discussed it is impossible to say, for Otto Nugent and his wife came in at this moment, followed immediately by Captain Lawson and Mr. Scott, Arthur's friends, and very soon by everybody else. Then came the arrival of a few neighbours who had driven through the snow. Last of all, when the whole party was assembled, Miss Fanny Latimer slipped in so quietly that nobody noticed her at the moment, except the one person who was watching for her, and she had hardly had time to speak to anybody when dinner was announced.

The little lady's smartness had in great measure departed. Her pretty head drooped, and looked almost dowdy; it seemed to want a finishing touch. She seemed to have shrunk into her dress, which hung about her carelessly. Her manner was absent and distracted; a slight frown spoke of depths of silent worry. She was pale, and her mouth looked drawn and old. She talked and listened with a kind of mock earnestness to a good-natured hunting neighbour, Colonel Graham, who had taken her in to dinner.

The party was a very cheerful one, and nobody noticed Fanny's looks much. The young people were busy with each other, the old with the young. Only Mr. Cantillon watched her, and with a kind of puzzled disappointment, which brought an imploring smile into her eyes as she glanced once or twice at him. When Arthur Nugent's voice was heard—he was looking very handsome and in wonderful spirits—she turned to Colonel Graham with even more eagerness than before. The only person she looked at much was her dear niece Porphyria—fair, beautiful, serene. To her Fanny's eyes seemed to be painfully attracted, and once when she suddenly looked away, turning once more to her friendly neighbour, they were shining with tears. Into such a state of nervous misery had the last hour brought her, the happiest woman in Bryans, while her own peaceful future lived on just the same, even watching her at the same table out of Henry Cantillon's kind eyes.

THE REMARKABLE SIDE OF MARRIAGE.

LASTING UNIONS.

AS there is no subject in which more people are interested than marriage, seeing that nearly the whole male and female

population of the world contemplate it at one time or another, a few curiosities of the marriage tie may prove interesting. Of those who have been a long time married there are not many instances on record, though doubtless a careful enquiry would furnish numerous cases.

The greatest period covered by a marriage tie which I have been able to find is of recent date, and for aught I know to the contrary still continues. In 1888 a couple were living at the Hacienda of Rio Florida, Mexico, who had then been married ninety-five years. The husband was one hundred and twenty and the wife one hundred and ten years of age. The owners of the Hacienda and the residents on the neighbouring plantations were then looking forward with pleasure to giving this old couple many wedding presents on the hundredth anniversary of their marriage, which will be next year, 1893.

In May, 1890, death dissolved what must have been the longest marriage union in this country. Mr. Hugh Jones, of Clynnog, who was buried in that month, was, according to local records and beliefs, married to Sian Jones as long ago as Easter, 1813. For seventy-seven years this faithful couple had been man and wife, and their diamond wedding was celebrated in 1888 with appropriate pomp and circumstance. A fortnight before his death the old gentleman had a fall which resulted fatally. His widow, though confined to her room, and one hundred and two years of age, was in full possession of her intellectual faculties.

In 1889, at Moore, near Warrington, there resided a Darby and Joan, whose united ages totalled one hundred and seventy-two years, who had been married sixty years and had brought up a large family. They were both born in the district, and had occupied the same house half a century.

A writer in the "Gentleman's Magazine," in 1763, records that "About three months ago I had an opportunity of conversing with Robert Ogleby, the old travelling tinker. He says he has not eaten any flesh meat for twelve years, but lives chiefly on bread and milk, butter, cheese, and puddings. He married at the age of twenty-two, and lived with his wife seventy-five years. He has twenty-five children, twelve sons and thirteen daughters. His wife died thirteen years ago. His father lived to the age of one hundred and forty." At the time this writer saw Ogleby he

must have been in his one hundred and tenth year, as the Ripon Parish Register for the sixteenth of November, 1654, states that on that day was born "Robert Ogleby, son of John Ogleby, of Rippon."

Early in the last century, William Douglas, of Lanark, married a wife who was born at the same hour on the same day as himself. They were christened at the same church, and at nineteen years of age were married with the consent of their relatives at the church in which they had been baptized. During the course of a long life they experienced no infirmity, and died at the age of one hundred years on the same day, reposing together on the old nuptial bed. They were interred in the same grave beneath the baptismal font where nearly a century before they had been presented for the Church's first sacrament.

In July, 1768, a couple were living in Essex who had been married eighty-one years, the husband being one hundred and seven, and the wife one hundred and three years of age.

About the same time there died at Coal Pit Heath, Gloucestershire, aged one hundred and three years, a yeoman, and the day following his funeral, his widow, aged one hundred and fifteen years, who had also been married eighty-one years.

MARRYING EARLY AND MARRYING OFTEN.

The first place in the list of those who have married early and married often must be taken by Lady Elizabeth Darcey, the daughter of Thomas Earl Rivers, on account of the curious coincidence attending her marriages. She was wooed by three suitors at the same time, and the knights, as in chivalry bound, were disposed to contest the prize in the customary manner. This the lady peremptorily forbade, and promised in a jocular manner, if they had but patience, she would have them all three in their turn, and what is most remarkable she literally fulfilled her promise. First she married Sir George Trenchard, of Wolverton, who left her a widow at seventeen; secondly, Sir John Gage, of Firlie; and thirdly, William Henry, of Hickworth, the three original claimants for her hand.

More remarkable still is the case of a farmer in one of the northern counties, who one day took five young women in his cart to a religious service. After the drive and the service he became the

husband of one of the ladies. She died, and when he was in search of a second wife he met another of those who had joined him in the drive. She was not averse to the match, and they were married. Like number one she did not live long, and in succession he married the third, fourth, and fifth of the young women. Whether he lived to place number five by the side of her companions is not recorded, and this is just where the story falls in its completeness.

There died at Florence, in 1768, Elizabeth Masé, who was led to the altar seven times and buried the whole of her partners. Her last venture was at seventy years of age. On her death-bed she recalled the good and bad points of each husband, and having weighed them impartially, expressed a desire to be buried by the side of her fifth husband.

An announcement in England in the same year stated that Mr. Silvertop was lately united at Newcastle to Mrs. Pearson. It was, says the announcement, "the third time the lady had been led to the altar in the character of a bride, and there has been something remarkable in each of her three connubial engagements. Her first husband was a Quaker, her second a Roman Catholic, and her third a Protestant of the Established Church. Each husband was twice her age. At sixteen she married a gentleman of thirty-two; at thirty she took one of sixty; and now at forty-two she is united to a gentleman of eighty-four."

At an agricultural village in England, some time in the last century, a couple were joined in the holy bonds of matrimony whose united ages came to one hundred and fifty-eight years; the bride was eighty-one, and the bridegroom seventy-seven. The groom's Christian name was Thomas, and the bride's Mary. The groom had twice before married a Mary, and the bride had twice before married a Thomas. To crown all, both were at the time of their marriage in receipt of parochial relief.

A gentleman died at Bourdeaux, in 1772, who had led no fewer than sixteen ladies to the hymeneal altar.

The same year witnessed the nuptials of a lady, eighty-five years of age, who had espoused six husbands, with her seventh. This marriage took place at the church of St. Clement Dane, London.

About the same time a gentleman died at the age of one hundred and fifteen years who had had four wives, and who left

behind to mourn his loss a widow and twenty-three children, whose ages varied from three to eighty years.

In 1784 there died an old army veteran who had had five wives, and his widow, ninety years of age, wept over the grave of her fourth husband.

The merry month of June, 1778, saw celebrated at St. Bridget's Church, Chester, the marriage of Mr. George Harding, a youthful bridegroom of one hundred and seven years, and Mrs. Catherine Woodward, a blushing damsel of eighty-three years. The bridegroom served in the army for thirty-nine years, during the reign of Queen Anne, George the First, and part of George the Second. He was at the time of his marriage particularly hearty, in great spirits, and had retained his faculties to an extraordinary perfection. This was his fifth matrimonial venture, his last previous essay having been at the age of one hundred and five. His bride had thrice before been led to the altar. The record of the event states that Mr. Harding's diet for thirty years had consisted of butter-milk boiled with a little flour, and bread and cheese.

In 1804, Mr. Samuel, of Sonning, after burying four wives, led Mrs. E. Newkirk to the altar, she overlooking the fact that she had to take to no fewer than thirty-two children.

In the same year there died at Balbincoring, Ireland, Mr. Coorslin, one hundred and fourteen years of age. This venturesome old gentleman led to the altar his seventh wife at the age of ninety-three years, and when he died he left behind forty-three children, two hundred and thirty-six grandchildren, and nine hundred and forty-four great grandchildren.

Very early in the present century (1805) there was recorded the case of an amorous old lady, eighty years of age, who had buried three husbands, and then threw away her crutches at the door of a wold church in Yorkshire on becoming the wife of a farmer named Wood.

A Mr. Meadows, of Liverpool, had a record which is unique. He was married for the sixth time, aged seventy-five years, at Walton Church in 1807. The first period of widowhood lasted a year, the second a month, the third seven weeks, the fourth nine months, and the fifth the shortest of all—only six weeks.

In 1809, Mrs. Jarvis, of Hawarden, married her sixth husband, a publican,

named John Wright. At the time of this marriage she was in the eighties, and had only interred her last choice five weeks previously.

In 1816 a youth named Jones had sufficient courage to marry Mrs. Mary Harris, a fifty-five year old widow, who had deposited beneath the daisies no fewer than five husbands.

The last instance is not so much a record of numerous marriages as an instance of coincidences. Mr. Butin, an inhabitant of Commynes, who died there early in the century at the age of eighty-four years, was only twice married. His second wife was born the day his first wife died, and on the birthday he jocularly remarked he would never marry any other wife than that infant. For twenty years he waited, and then led the "infant" to the altar, he being aged sixty-four years. The first child was born twelve months after marriage, and the second twenty years later. At his death he left several children, the eldest of whom was sixty years of age, and the youngest two months. He lived twenty years with his first wife, was twenty years a widower, and his second marriage lasted twenty years.

THE MEETING OF EXTREMES.

Probably extremes meet more often in marriage than in any other undertaking in life. Particularly is this the case with regard to age—the mating of May and December being no uncommon occurrence. In these days, however, such occurrences are not blazoned forth as they were a century ago, and seekers after antiquities are perhaps apt to suppose they are less frequent than they used to be. Old newspapers and historical and chronological magazines are full of them, and it may not be uninteresting to note a few at the present time.

In Scotland, in the year 1749, a most extraordinary case of decrepitude and vigour being united occurred. The bridegroom, a noted old bachelor named William Hamilton, was so deformed as to be utterly unable to walk. His legs were drawn up to his ears, his arms were twisted backwards, and almost every member of his body was out of joint. Added to these peculiarities was the fact that he was eighty years of age, and had to be carried to church on men's shoulders. Nevertheless, a fair maid of only twenty-two summers

had the courage to accompany him into the sacred edifice and pledge herself to love, honour, and obey him as long as life should last. In all probability there was some ulterior motive to be served, or this union would not have taken place. It is absurd to suppose that "sacred love" had anything to do with the marriage.

The "Derby Mercury" for January, 1753, contains the following remarkable account of such a marriage:

"Ashford in the Peak, January the eighth, 1753. Sir,—If you please to give this a line in your paper, you will very much oblige your constant reader and humble servant, etc., J. C. Last Saturday, at the chapel of Sheldon, in the High Peak of Derbyshire, was solemnised the nuptials of a widow Gentlewoman, of that Place, of about Eighty Years of Age, to a Young Lad (by the Consent of his Parents) of about Fourteen. As she was render'd incapable of walking, by a Complication of Disorders, she was carried in her Chair, from her House to the Chapel, about a Hundred Yards distant, attended by a numerous Concourse of People; where the ceremony was performed with becoming Seriousness and Devotion; after which she was re-conducted in the same Manner, the Musick playing by her orders the Duke of Rutland's Hornpipe before her; to which (as she was disabled from dancing) she beat time with her Hands on her petticoats, till she got Home, and then Called for her Crutches, commanded her Husband to dance, and she shuffled herself as well as she could. The day being spent with the ringing of a Bell and other demonstrations of Joy; and the Populace (mostly Miners) being soundly drenched with Showers of Excellent Liquor, etc., that were plentifully poured upon them."

It appears happily or unhappily, as the case may be, that the ancient bride did not long survive her marriage, for in a subsequent issue during the same month the following announcement appeared:

"We are informed that last Sunday dy'd at Sheldon, near Bakewell, the old Gentlewoman who was marry'd on the fifth Instant to a young Lad, aged Fourteen, as mentioned in a former paper. Her Corpse was brought to Bakewell Church on Tuesday last, where it was handsomely interred, and a funeral Sermon preached on the occasion to a numerous and crowded Audience, by the Rev. Gentleman who had so lately perform'd the Nuptial Ceremonies."

In 1769 a seventy-two year old lady, residing at Rotherhithe, permitted a young gallant of twenty-three years to lead her to the altar, where she pledged him her troth, and he took her and her fortune for better or for worse.

In the same year a blind woman, ninety years of age, at Hill Farm, Berkshire, still possessed sufficient attractions to dazzle the eyes and win the heart of her twenty year old ploughman. Probably the farm went with the bride.

More easily understood is the case of an eighteen year old miss who hesitated not to accompany a Worcestershire Squire, eighty-five years of age, to the altar, and so become an old man's darling, that probably she might afterwards find a young man willing to accept her as a slave.

In February, 1769, Robert Judge, Esquire, of Cooksburgh, Ireland, then ninety-five years of age, was united to Miss Annie Nugent, aged fifteen years. The bridegroom had served in King William's wars, and received a musket ball in his nose.

At ninety years of age Robert Cumming, of Strathapy, walked forty miles for the purpose of espousing a bride in the twenties, while an octogenarian lover walked fifteen miles to lead a fifteen year old bride to church.

In 1774 a sprightly youth just verging on his century cast in his lot with a blushing matron of thirty. At the ceremony he was so infirm or nervous that the ring dropped several times before he could get it on her finger. After marriage, however, he had so far recovered as to be able to discard his faithful cane on leaving the church.

Though much merriment is often made of May and December marriages, they are not always unhappy. A noteworthy example of how happy they may be is furnished by the case of Cromwell's Chancellor, Sir Bulstrode Whitelocke, and a young widow named Mary Wilson. Mary's first husband, who died while a young man, was a city merchant, and during the Civil War obtained the post of Colonel in the Parliamentary forces. On his death, many wooed the widow, who possessed considerable charms both of mind and manner, but Sir Bulstrode succeeded in carrying off the prize. The lady kept a diary, written for her son, in which the following quaint entry appears: "Whom to choose I knew not, for they were all

alike to me. At last I went to God by prayer, and did lay my condition before the Lord, and beg of Him that if it were His good pleasure to have me alter my condition, that He would choose out a fitting match for me. As for my own part, I did slight titles and honours. When I was in this frame of spirit, amongst many others came a grave gentleman that had ten children, which at the first notice did startle me, and did cause all my friends to be against it. But after I had spent very much time in seeking God to direct me, at last I was brought to consider that children were a blessing. 'Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them; they shall not be ashamed, but shall speak with the enemies in the gate.' And seeing that they were a blessing and the gift of God, as you may see in Psalm cxxxiii., the third and fourth verses, where the Lord saith: 'Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine by the side of thine house; thy children like olive plants round about thy table. Behold, thus shall the man be blessed that feareth the Lord.' So that I durst not refuse a man for having ten blessings. And God did hear my prayers and bless our marriage, for He did give me a great mercy in my husband."

It is to be regretted that all wives and husbands have not this happy experience, but it is to be feared that for one so full of connubial bliss, there are many ill-assorted couples fretting and fuming to break a yoke which galls them.

The year 1805 saw the union of Lieutenant Humphreys, of the Lizard Signal Station, who was born half-way in the previous century, with a fifteen year old wife; while a disabled veteran named Feltham, seventy-two years of age, who had served in the Royal Marines, was carried to church at Trowbridge, in a sedan chair, to become the husband of a girl of sixteen.

More remarkable, perhaps, was the case of a farmer residing in the neighbourhood of Sheffield, who, in 1804, when seventy-five years of age, led a child bride to the altar. This gay young spark had, half a century before, led to the altar an old maid who might have been his grandmother.

To take another instance of an elderly bride. Early in the century, according to the "Hibernian Gazette," Mr. John Hogarty, of Ballymanduff, Dublin County, before he had attained his majority, was sufficiently courageous to link his fate with widow Flood, who possessed the experience gained by eighty-eight winters. It is

impossible to understand the case of Miss Carr, twenty-two years of age, the possessor of fifteen thousand pounds, who gave herself and her fortune to a clergyman sixty years older than herself, unless she preferred being an old man's darling to a young man's slave.

I have only one more instance, and I will leave the subject. At Tynemouth Church, in 1805, a young man about twenty-three years of age was duly married to a widow of eighty-six, who had been the mother of no fewer than seventeen children. Notwithstanding that the banns had been but twice published, the experienced lady repaired to the church, where she was soon joined by her lover, and declared she would not leave it without her errand. It was only after considerable remonstrance that she was persuaded to leave and return again after the legal period of publication had elapsed.

CHILD MARRIAGES.

England can furnish instances of child marriages, not perhaps to any great extent, but as young as any to be found in Eastern countries, where such marriages are almost of daily occurrence. The youngest English bride on record is, beyond all doubt, a daughter of Sir William Brereton, who, in the sixteenth century, was united in the bonds of holy matrimony, when only two years of age, to a bridegroom who was only her senior by one year. In this case the children were carried into church, and their elders spoke for them. Subsequently, when the pair reached years of maturity, they ratified the strange tie. In this instance the object was to carry out a desire to unite property.

In 1562 Randle Moore was married at the age of eight years to a bride two years his senior; and about the same time Emma Talbot, six years of age, had a five year old husband provided for her in the person of Gilbert Gerrard. In this case the bridegroom's uncle held him up and spoke the marriage words for him, while the bride answered for herself, as she had been taught.

In 1582 William Chatterton, who was Bishop of Chester and Lincoln successively, thought it nothing out of the way to perform the marriage ceremony uniting his nine year old daughter Joan with Richard Brooke, an eleven year old "man." This ceremony was, by consent of the contracting parties, ratified four years later.

The Chester Church records contain lengthy documents testifying to this ratification. In this instance the marriage was not a success, for the Bishop records that the wife was separated from her husband.

REMARKABLE COMBINATIONS.

The daily and weekly newspapers are constantly recording curious combinations of names in the marriage columns, and those who study them will often be rewarded with something unique. Indeed such combinations have proved inspiration sufficient for the poet's pen. Such was the case when a Mr. Six was united to Miss Dunbar. On this occasion a poet with an eye to the main chance wrote :

It used to be when folks were wed
 "These two are one," the parson said.
 But see how Hymen, full of tricks,
 Has made two one, yet made them Six ;
 Nay, each is Six, and one as well,
 Are both a dozen ? Who can tell
 How shall we reckon by-and-by,
 When six by six we multiply ?
 How e'er it be, grant gracious heavens,
 They ne'er may be at six and sevens.

At Barnstable and Chicago there once occurred the oddest collection of queer names it is possible to find. At Barnstable, Rev. John Gates joined together for better or worse Mr. John Post to Miss Sarah Rails ! At Chicago the knot was tied which bound Mr. Halter and Miss Rope in an indissoluble bond by the Rev. Mr. Knott ! Surely such a marriage was fast bound !

On the seventeenth of May, 1834, Joshua Peck and Amelia Bushel were married at Washington, when a local poet penned these lines :

All zookers, robes, and wedding cakes—
 What change of measures marriage makes ;
 Quick as a thought at Hymen's beck
 A Bushel changed into a Peck.

On the third of February, 1814, Mr. Isaac Hill, one of the editors of the "Concord Patriot," was married to Miss Ayer, and this effusion was quickly penned :

As I walked out the other day,
 Through Concord Street I took my way ;
 I saw a sight I thought quite rare—
 A Hill walked out to take the Ayer.
 And now, since earth and air have met together,
 I think there'll be a change of weather.

Very witty was the couplet which was written when, at New York, in 1832, Mr. Thomas A. Secord carried off Miss Cordelia Ketcham :

"Ketcham, Cordelia, if you can."
 "I have," says she ; "Secord's the man."

Equally good is the verse on the marriage

of James Anderson and Miss Ann Bread at Black Lake, in 1828 :

While toasts the lovely graces spread,
 And fops around them flutter,
 I'll be contented with Ann Bread,
 And won't have any but her.

A cold match was that which was converted into a marriage at Washington in March, 1814, between Mr. Samuel Winter and Miss Pamela January, while there was a touch of sadness about one a year later between Captain Graves and Miss Nancy Graves, of Carrol, N.C.

At Swindon, Wiltshire, some years ago, Mr. Duck eloped with Miss Herring, which gave the inspiration for this stanza :

Off has a heron took flight with an eel,
 Or a trout by a bit of good luck,
 But I never could bring my mind to feel
 That a Herring would bolt with a Duck.

The last I shall quote of these marriages was celebrated at Winniesburg on the fifteenth of April, 1853. "By the Rev. Mr. Malone, at St. Peter's Church, Mr. W. Moon to Miss Agnes Cooke." This is what the local poet wrote :

He is not mad, though lunar light
 His broth did overlook,
 For he has gained, to his delight,
 A wife that is a Cooke.
 His goose is cooked, and other maids
 May envy her the boon,
 Whose tall ambition wished and got
 The bright man in the Moon.

A DEAN'S MEMORIES.

IN TWO PARTS. PART II.

FOND though he be of wild flowers, Dean Hole delights in gardening, and concurs with Bacon in esteem for its high value. Is it the dim innate remembrance of Eden, he wonders, which makes our childhood so happy among the flowers ? And then he gives a pretty picture of a child's garden, drawn from his own happy memory of home ; where the doll's-house represented the family mansion, and the wives of pre-diluvial persons were assembled, with some other creatures, from Noah's Ark ; and where the gardener, "a tin soldier in full uniform with fixed bayonet, spent most of his time lying on his stomach, his form being fragile, and the situation windy." Nor does he forget the arbour, formed of an old oyster-barrel lying on its side, which had furnished shells for hedgerows, as in Lord Macaulay's days of ancient home ; when, discovering that his small sister had displaced a boundary, he rushed into the house, ex-

claiming in his wrath : "Cursed be Sally ! Cursed be he that removeth his neighbour's landmark !"

From gay to grave. As a sad contrast to this pleasantry, the Dean describes on the page previous the visit of a lady friend of his to a garret in Whitechapel, taking a fresh bunch of primroses to a poor heart-broken woman who had crossed the Bridge of Sighs, and was stricken nigh to death by suffering and sin. "She looked at them for a few seconds with a stupid stare of apathy, and then suddenly they suggested some thought which seemed to thrill through her like a galvanic shock, and she burst into tears, 'tears from the depths of some divine despair, while thinking of the days that are no more.'"

Primroses the Dean loves ; and lovingly implores, with all the pathos of italics, that, when used for Easter services, they should be "in bunches, and in water." But while he loves the primrose, he adores the rose. And who can wonder at the preference ? What is there in all nature, sweet to smell and sweet to see, "like a rose embowered in its own green leaves ?" Queen of flowers, she commands the Dean's most loyal admiration, and his loyalty is shown by a life-service at her court. Beginning as a boy, by presiding at an exhibition of a few petals of pansies and roses, spread out upon paper and covered with bits of glass—"we called it a 'Flower Show,' and the servants said it was 'beautiful!'"—the Dean was the prime mover of the First National Rose Show; and himself enlarged his rose garden until he was the proud "lord of five thousand trees." He has personally known all the great rose-growers in England, and even some in France ; and has passed many an anxious hour with them while acting as a judge. For, despite his gift of humour and his kindness of heart, the Dean can be severe and stern as Rhadamanthus ; and, when condemned by justice, the miserable culprits find his sentences no joke. For instance, he records how once, while judging at a rose show, he heard a hint that an exhibitor, to whom a first prize appeared probable, had not grown but bought or borrowed some of the blooms he showed. So, being a man of action, the Dean jumped into a dog-cart, and drove some four miles to the garden of the suspected grower ; and was back in time to write upon his card—instead of the "First Prize" about to be awarded—the fatal words : "Disqualified, and expelled from the society."

Gardening, the Dean holds, is a refining occupation ; good alike for mind and body ; teaching both the love of the beautiful and the knowledge of the useful. And he asks, why should not horticulture be taught now in our schools ? With a colonial life in prospect, many a boy might be employed far better in learning to prune pear-trees, than in digging up Greek roots, and the heirs to lordly gardens would find life more worth living, if they knew how to manage them, and were not, as nine in ten are, at the mercy of their gardeners. And how vastly would the value of allotments be enhanced, if their owners had learned somewhat of the science of spade-husbandry ! "Tell the poor man how to grow vegetables and fruit, and his wife how to cook and preserve them, and the rich man to help both, starting them with a few good trees and seeds, and requesting his gardener to give occasional advice, and you will deserve and win the gratitude of your fellow-men."

To cricket the Dean fittingly devotes plenty of space. His memories date back to well-nigh prehistoric times, when the veteran Box kept wicket, and Fuller Pilch reigned king over the "wielders of the willow," to use the language of "Ball's Life," the euphemistic parent of our now prosaic sporting press. A man of Notts himself, he delights in telling how at a great match which he witnessed between that county and Kent, the famous bowler, Clark, lured Mynn to knock his ball off with the third ball bowled. He tells how he himself once made a "record" hit : while playing single wicket with a friend and his retriever. The dog, when fielding for his master, ran off with the ball, and the Dean scored twenty-seven runs before it was brought back. He tells, moreover, of a miner, who had much despised his parson until he made a big hit, which so startled the rough fielder that he fell flat on the ground in fear to stop the ball. Soon afterwards the poor fellow, being injured by an accident, sent for the clergyman ; and, on his avowing some surprise at the message, "Oh," said the miner frankly, "that hit o' yourn to square leg for six converted me !"

The Dean relates, too, a funny story of a bowler of sad countenance, who was a harmless lunatic brought from an asylum ; and who, with a prophetic preface of apology, gravely with his first ball ripped out the middle stump. And here the present writer is reminded of a game

which he once played in the grounds of an asylum, wherein a young doctor, a Cantab, and himself were the only players who reputedly were sane. The match was singularly noiseless, but varied by strange incidents. The bowler would pause suddenly, while just in the act of delivering a ball, and would fling it to a fielder, who would throw it high in air, as though a wicket had been felled. Or the batter would just block a ball, and calmly pick it up and put it in his pocket, and then start smilingly to score some half-a-dozen runs.

Of authors and of artists the Dean has much to say, including among the former both Charles Dickens and Thackeray, and among the latter his dearest friend, John Leech. His own efforts as an author began in early boyhood, his first drama being acted at the age of eight. That it was thoroughly sensational may be gathered from its start: "Act I., Scene I. Enter a man, swimming for his life!" The author, being also the principal performer, was so exhausted by his efforts that the rest of this great play remains in memory a blank. But of the grand epic which succeeded it the splendid opening couplet has been happily preserved:

We heard the rumbling of Great Gallia's drum,
Onward we saw the hostile army come.

Of this the Dean says proudly:

"I consider [the rumbling] to be one of the most striking lines in the language; and I have often wished, when in Paris and in other cities of France, that she had only one drum to rumble!"

With Thackeray the Dean was frequently in company, first meeting him at Leech's house, and there standing back to back with him to see who was the taller; the height being declared equal, three inches and six feet. This elicited apt reference to the Eton boy's pentameter,

Gigantes que duo, super honore meo—

to be found in his fine classic poem upon Windsor Fair. Of Thackeray, his fellow "gigas," the Dean declares with emphasis that "he was the best talker I ever knew;" and certainly his knowledge has been wide in this respect. Specially he instances a conversation, wherein a learned man from Cambridge took some part; and when Thackeray affirmed that one of the best results of knowledge was to convince a man of his ignorance. "He seemed to preach from the text, although he did not name it, that the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God."

The Dean lived in still closer companionship with Leech: both in his happy home, where he was loved so dearly, and in the hunting-field, where his blithe humour was delightful. He liked to ride a quiet horse; and then, feeling safely mounted, he could let his mind be occupied by beauties of the scenery, or incidents worth noticing, which his quick eye was sure to seize upon, and his clever pencil was quick to reproduce. "Give me an animal," he would say, "on which you can carry an umbrella in a hail-storm." It was with John Leech that the Dean made his "Little Tour in Ireland;" whereof the pleasure was enhanced by the artist's sweet society, and the record was enriched by the treasures of his art. It was through Leech's friendship that the Dean had the rare privilege of dining with Mr. Punch at his official weekly banquet; an honour which no clergyman until then had enjoyed, and probably none since. It was Leech who acted as the Dean's "best man;" begging timely notice so as duly to devise fit dressing for the part. It was Leech who, having just returned from seeing a bull-fight at Bayonne which had sickened and disgusted him, sent the Dean—with "hip! hip! hoo-ray!" scrawled upon the margin—a fancy portrait of his first-born in the arms of its proud father; and designated pleasantly "the last New Rose—designed for the 'Gardener's Annual.'"

Many a happy day did the two friends spend together, until there came quite suddenly that saddest of all days to the survivor, when he read the service at the funeral of his friend, with tears of deepest heartfelt sorrow in his voice. "I said the Burial Office as best I could at the grave, which was close to Thackeray's and was surrounded by his friends. Looking up during the service, I was for a second startled to see what seemed to me at first an apparition, an exact likeness of what John Leech would have been had he lived to old age. It was his father, whom I had not met before. I pray, and hope, and believe that I shall meet his son, not by the gate of death but of life, when

With the morn those angel-faces smile,
Which I have loved long since, and lost awhile."

A hard worker himself, Dean Hole has naturally deep sympathy with real working men; true, honest, active workmen, and not the lazy bawlers, who pose upon the platforms as the mouthpiece of "the masses," or as the ill-fed—though plump—victims of the tyranny of trade. Such an orator the Dean describes as going

on the stump, and being neatly silenced by a sturdy blacksmith. The spouter was declaiming about the loathsome vampires who fattened on the labour of such martyrs as himself, the honest sons of toll. "You a labourer!" broke in the village Vulcan with great scorn; "the lord as had to live upon the labour of such a skulk as you, he wouldn't be a fat 'un!"

Drink and dirt are generally found together, and impurity of air may cause impurity of life. "You come and live in our court," exclaimed a slum-born sot to a friendly philanthropist, "and you'll soon take to the gin!" Bad food, too, like foul air, is provocative of drinking; and much misery might be cured by clever cookery and thrift. "If there were more wives who were good cooks," the Dean most sensibly remarks with all the emphasis of italics, "there would be more husbands at supper."

Like good Sir Walter Scott, the Dean delights in holding converse with poor people. Specially he notices their frequent use of Scripture phrases; which at times seem oddly out of place. Take, for instance, the old woman who had seen "a sight o' trouble," having lately lost her sister; and who lamented bitterly "a worse job nor that," for the pig had died "all of a sudden," it having, she said piously, "pleased the Lord to tak' 'im, and they mun bow, they mun bow!" And then there shone a gleam of sunshine upon her sad face as she added smilingly: "But there's one thing, Mestur Allen, as I can say, and ought to say; the Lord's been pratty well on my side this winter for greens!"

Rough men have rough manners, and tongues not always smooth. But though their hands are hard they often have soft hearts, and their gratitude is deeply felt, although it may be oddly shown. Such, for instance, as that of the poor villager, who, on recovery from illness, offered to go and "poach a little rabbit" for his reverence, whose visits he had highly valued. And the Dean gives a still better story of a clergyman, sitting late one Saturday in the quiet of his study—engaged doubtless on his sermon—when suddenly there entered a poor miner, who said very gravely: "Mester Whitworth, you've been very kind to my ould gal when she were sick so long abed, and I want to do yer a good turn, and I can do yer a good turn. There's going to be the gradiest dog-fight in this place to-morrow, and I can get yer into th' inner ring!"

Plain of speech, too, are poor people, and apt to pay small heed to the feelings of their hearers. Indeed, their want of tact is often quite remarkable, and their ways of putting things are devoid of much politeness. A district visitor, for instance, who had taken a short holiday, was greeted with what possibly was meant to be a compliment on her improved appearance. "Well, to be sure, ma'am, you do look a bit altered like; as I were a-sayin' to the Vicar on'y yest'day. 'Mrs. Dorcas,' I says, meanin' you, ma'am, 'she don't look near so old as when I last see her a-wisitin'!'" Knowing well the feminine weakness in respect of any personal reference to age, a French peasant never would have uttered such a doubtful compliment.

Nor are our poor folk much inclined to mincing matters in saying what they think. "You're looking fine and ill," is a frequent salutation. "Seems to me you're kind o' breakin' up like," is a phrase of friendly greeting not uncommon in East Anglia. "Well, Booth," began a sympathetic neighbour, "thee'd like to get better, wouldn't thee, Booth? But thee mun dee, this whet." Such cheerful words of comfort remind us of a talkative old alms-woman we lately met in Suffolk. Being asked what was the matter with her, she replied with great solemnity and scarce a pause in utterance: "Well, raly now, I can't say rightly, for I'm that full o' complaints, an' as neighbour Bildad was a-tellun me just by way o' comfort like, if it 'ud please the Lord to spare me till they all come to a point I'd be quite a cur'osity an' wuth payin' to look at!"

Not being highly sensitive, poor folk pay little heed to the weakness of nerves of people less robust. Well might the timid Curate be startled by the ghastly message reaching him quite suddenly: "Please, sir, the corpse is waiting for you!" Nor could he have felt vastly anxious for the interview, when afterwards informed that the corpse's brother would be glad to have a word with him. Dark hints, too, of disaster are dropped in friendly intercourse, and seem to be much relished. In the reading of the newspaper, accounts of dreadful accidents are greedily spelled over, and still more welcome are the details of criminal reports. It can scarce have been good news to a tract-bearing, yet tender-hearted district visitor, to hear a poor sick woman tell her, as a proof of convalescence: "I find, ma'am, I begin more to enjoy them drefful murders!"

Poor people, like rich people, seldom lack sufficient courage to bear another's sufferings. But though awkward in their sympathy, and uncouth in its expression, they are usually generous and earnest in their help. A toothless old woman, who had listened very calmly to the pregnant words of "weeping and gnashing of teeth," was overheard complacently mumbling to herself, "Let 'em gnash 'em as 'as 'em!" Yet her apathy was probably the mere accident of age, and in her younger days she doubtless sat up all night long to nurse an ailing neighbour, nor would have spared herself much suffering to save her child from pain. The Dean tells a touching story of self-sacrifice, which he heard from his good friend Dr. Brown, who lived at Chatham once, before he went to Edinburgh, and there wrote so charmingly of "Rab" and other dogs. In the year '32 there was an outbreak of cholera, and Dr. Brown was summoned suddenly to a village on the Medway. As they neared the place, he saw an anxious crowd awaiting him, and before the boat touched shore, a big man plunged into the water, took the doctor on his back, and hurried him away to the bedside of a boy—the grandson of "Big Joe"—who lay stricken nigh to death. The lad was saved; the grandfather, exhausted by his effort and smitten by the malady, died that very night.

Merriment and wisdom are proverbially united, and happiness is mostly the result of good hard work. The Dean has little pity for people, rich or poor, whose discontent and selfish grumbling mainly springs from their own laziness; their whole lives being summed up in the poet's pregnant line:

Lives spent in indolence, and therefore sad.

To prove by simple contrast the wise truth which Cowper utters, we may take for our last extract a few words about a poor man with whom Dr. Brown, when on a visit to the Dean, took special pleasure in a talk. The good doctor first noticed him when hobbling to the village church with the help of two stout sticks, and crying out cheerily to an old fellow cripple who was using only one: "Why, Sammy, you're a poor crittur! Why don't you drive a pair like a gentleman?" "And surely no man," says the Dean, "could be more 'like a gentleman' than he who spoke those words. Not long before Dr. Brown's visit he came to me, as we were

going into church, and said: 'Do you think, sir, you could bring in that prayer about giving thanks this morning? I'm eighty years old to-day, and I should like to thank God for all the mercies He has been pleased to send.'"

"Thankful for small mercies," cynics possibly may sneer when they read the Dean's next words: "He had one room in a small cottage, his income was three shillings a week, he had no relations and few friends, he was often ailing and always infirm; and yet he had not only learned, in whatsoever state he was, therewith to be content, but he was always happy."

Such wisdom may seem folly to selfish, idle grumblers, who wall over their worries and so increase their wretchedness. And the moralising pessimist, who doubts if life be much worth living, would certainly be sceptical of coupling it with happiness on three shillings a week. Nor, perhaps, might an agnostic, in his self-esteeming ignorance, put great faith in such a final scene of trusting peacefulness as that in which this poor old crippled happy peasant crept out of the world:

"He was a Christian in spirit and in truth, and the last words he spoke to me, just before his death, were these: 'I am not dying in darkness; I am dying in the light of life.'"

If only we had more of such good-hearted clergymen and such good honest poor folk, we might have fewer blatant demagogues and discontented beggars, and might find it far more easy to solve the labour question.

AN UNSOLVED MYSTERY.

A COMPLETE STORY.

CHAPTER I.

THE moonlight lay in vivid patches on the old house.

It was a long, low, red-brick structure, built in no particular style, and apparently in no particular reign. It was a jumble of different architecture. Here was a gable; there a turret; now a Norman gateway; here a Gothic one. It had been begun, added to, altered, pulled down, and built up again, till probably the old Norman arch which guarded the entrance to the grounds was the only bit of the original building left. Norman, Gothic, Tudor, Queen Anne—all went to make up a very charming whole—a whole covered with creepers, and trailing roses,

and starry jessamine. And in one of the quaint turret rooms of this odd building slept a girl.

It was a hot July night. The moon shone on the soft lawns and silvery fountain; then it crept up the stone steps to the terrace above, gay with the pale primrose which only opens its delicate petals to the wooing evening breeze; then on up the creeper-covered walls till it reached a casement window flung wide open to admit the flower-scented air. There it seemed to pause and explore.

It flung floods of light across a quaintly furnished room, rich with many an antique treasure, and seemed to centre all its brilliance on a white draped bed at the further end. There lay a girl.

She was asleep. Her lips were half parted to catch the scented night wind; her long lashes swept a delicate rose-tinted cheek. The moon showed how beautiful she was.

Presently she stirred uneasily, and finally sat up, her long, dark hair streaming over her snowy lace-trimmed draperies. She sat up with an intent expression on her face as though she were gazing at some object close at hand. But her eyes remained shut.

She became gradually more and more agitated, her hands were tightly clenched together, her face assumed a strange expression of fear, of anguish, of sadness.

Presently her eyes opened, but, only yet half awake, they gazed blankly out into the moonlit space. She seemed to be concentrating all her powers on one particular portion of the room.

Then she woke in reality, and the strained expression of anguish left her face, although the look of fear was still there.

"Again!" she said aloud. And she shuddered.

She had been gazing all through her sleep at a man's face. It was dark and pale, framed in masses of lustreless jet-black hair. It had a melancholy drooping mouth, and deep, dark, sombre eyes, as fathomless as mountain tarns on a sunless day.

It seemed close to her, and when she awoke and opened her eyes she thought for the moment that the dream face was real, that she had actually returned the strange, half passionate, half mocking gaze of those melancholy eyes.

For three weeks she had seen the face whenever she shut her eyes. And every

night she awoke, her eyes unclosing in spite of themselves at the bidding of that magnetic look.

She rose hastily from her bed, and throwing a light shawl on, went to the window and leaned out. One hand was pressed to her breast; the wild beating of her heart threatened to suffocate her.

The garden, fair and smiling, cool and peaceful, met her view. The scent of the starry jessamine floated towards her. The serene gaze of the stars seemed to still the fevered pulses.

"I am haunted, haunted!" she murmured to herself once or twice.

Then she laid her head down on the ledge of the window and burst into tears, sobbing like a frightened child.

"I am afraid!" she sobbed half aloud. And this time the serene glance of the stars seemed to mock her, and the gentle wind stirring the trembling leaves sent "light horrors" through her pulses.

She rose and paced wildly up and down the room. Every corner of it was bright as day.

"I must tell him. I cannot bear it alone," she thought. "He may laugh at it if he likes; but it is killing me. I cannot go on like this. I shall go mad!"

Almost involuntarily she shut her eyes—and the face came back to her. It remained so long in its clear persistency that she could gaze on it at will—always the same—pale to ghastliness, with its sweep of black hair, and its unhappy, sombre eyes.

"Good Heaven! Who can it be?" she cried in anguish. "I have never seen any one like that before."

She sat down again trembling from head to foot.

"Can I be really going mad?" she thought with a shudder. "I have read of people being haunted like this. But why should I be? I was happy till it came—and now my life is one long terror."

With a sudden movement she sank down on her knees beside the window, her eyes raised in appeal to the purple depth of vault behind which her childish faith told her that God dwelt.

She prayed long and earnestly for freedom from the terrible curse which had fallen upon her; prayed with innocent trust in the great God who watched unceasingly in the star-bespangled sky.

And as she prayed, the wooing wind kissed her cheek, the scent of the flowers

came to her as in a dream, a deep sense of peace and rest crept over her—and there, still in the same position, a suppliant at the foot of God's throne, she fell asleep, and dreamed of the face no more.

CHAPTER II.

"DON'T laugh at me, Edwin. I can't bear it."

"My dear Violet, I am not laughing at you; but you take the thing too seriously altogether. I only want to show you how morbid and fanciful you are."

"It is not fancy, Edwin. I see it every night as plainly as I see you."

"Yes, yes, dear," he answered soothingly, though secretly alarmed at the deep-rootedness of her "fancy." "Of course you do, but heaps of people have vivid dreams."

"Not a dream like that. I tell you, Edwin, he wakes me every night by the power of his gaze."

"Violet, you are carrying this folly too far. You are indulging it, and the more you do that the stronger it will grow. You must not think about it, and then you will forget it."

She was silent for a moment. Then she said in a low voice:

"It has taken so strong a hold on me, Edwin, and made me so miserably terrified, that I have seriously thought of breaking off our engagement."

They were standing on the stone terrace watching the peacocks strutting to and fro below them, spreading their splendid tails and uttering harsh notes of pleasure at their own beauty. There was a rustic bench close by, and Edwin Armitage drew her gently to it.

"This has gone farther than I supposed, Violet," he said gravely, when they were seated, "and I must know more about it all. Forget that I am your lover, dear, and look upon me as a doctor only. When you have answered my questions perhaps I shall be able to give you something that will make these nightly terrors disappear like magic."

He drew her head down on to his shoulder, and she nestled to him with a sigh. It would be a relief to tell all her secret dread to Edwin.

"When did you first see the face, Violet?"

"About three weeks ago."

"By day or night?"

"In broad daylight. I had been sitting

reading, and suddenly grew tired, and laid the book down. I shut my eyes for a moment and the outlines of the face appeared. I was fascinated into watching it grow complete, it was so life-like."

"You had not been asleep? You are sure of it?"

"Quite sure."

"What book had you been reading—anything calculated to give rise to the fancy?"

"It was a volume of Tennyson's. I am positive the book had nothing to do with it. Edwin, if I do not get rid of it it will kill me! I dread the night so horribly."

"We will get rid of it, never fear," he said cheerily. "What a nervous, excitable little woman it is! And so this is what has been making the pretty cheeks so pale and the pretty eyes so heavy. Why, in a week's time you will be laughing at yourself! It is just indigestion and nervousness, my dear Violet. I shall give you a sleeping draught to-night, and to-morrow your white-faced, black-haired friend will have disappeared."

He laughed lightly.

"So you were actually going to give me up for your dream hero," he said cheerfully. "That is not a strong proof of your constancy, is it?"

But she could not laugh just yet. She had unburdened herself of her secret, but she had not got rid of her strong impression of haunting terror.

"It is so real," she said.

For a moment, in the brilliant dancing sunlight, with her lover by her side and all the cheerful sounds and sights of daylight around her, her thoughts flew swiftly back to the moonlit room and the strange foreign face. She dared not shut her eyes for fear that she might see it again.

"Of course it seems real, Violet, but you must try and be sensible, you know. It really only requires a strong effort of will—and a little help on my part," said Dr. Edwin Armitage, taking out his pocket-book and scribbling a prescription on one of its leaves. "That is a sleeping draught that will mean death to your Byronic nightly visitor," he added, as he gave it her. "Cheer up, Vi, he will not live much longer."

She took the paper and smiled faintly. She could not echo his cheerful words, or look lightly back at the vision which had so terrified her.

But she took the draught that night and

slept a deep and dreamless sleep, haunted by no evil or terrifying visions. She had a faint bloom of colour on her cheek when she met her lover the next day.

"So," he said, pinching her cheek, "we have made short work of him, I can see. Little goose, to be so easily frightened!"

Violet Lonsdale was her old self again that day, and went to bed without even a thought of her midnight visitor. Her last remembrance was of Edwin's smile and handclasp as he bade her good-bye.

But that night she saw the face again. Pale, stern, implacable as ever, gazing at her with burning, sombre eyes, which seemed to fasten themselves upon her very soul and compel its awakening. And she awoke, terrified as before.

This time she did not pray. She felt stupefied, fascinated, helpless. It was as though a snake had fixed its eyes upon her and thrown her into a trance of dumb terror.

"He has been again? Very persistent, I must say!" said Dr. Armytage with forced gaiety, as he came to pay his daily visit.

"Yes," said Violet in a crushed, lifeless voice. "It is no use, Edwin. And I have told papa. I am not going to marry you. I shall only grow worse, and, perhaps, even go mad."

"This is not like you, Violet. You are generally sensible."

"I cannot struggle any more," she answered dully.

He looked at her with a sudden pang. Her eyes were blank and hopeless, her cheeks hollow, her whole expression one of strained anguish. He recognised that the case was getting serious, and that strong measures must be taken at once. Her life, perhaps her reason, was at the mercy of this morbid hallucination. He bent over her and took her hand in his.

"Listen, Violet," he said firmly; "you have trust in me, have you not?"

"Yes; but you cannot help me here," she answered.

He controlled his impatience.

"I am going to alter your prescription, Violet," he said gently, "and order you something that will cure you. I swear it will cure you!" he cried with sudden passion.

She smiled listlessly.

"I will take whatever you like," she said, the blank look stealing over her eyes again.

"You are suffering from disordered

nervous imagination," he said. "You must travel—see different people—undergo constant change of scene. It is essential for you. Do you understand me, Violet? This queer old house and the strange room you persist in sleeping in are having a bad effect upon you."

"How can I travel?" said Violet, showing faint interest for a moment. "Papa is too old, and I cannot go alone."

"You shall go with me. I will devote myself to you. Marry me at once, Violet, and I promise you you shall never be troubled again."

A blush spread over her cheek. The suddenness of the idea seemed to rouse her from her lethargy.

"Will you, Violet?" he urged. "I will do all I can to make you happy."

It was long before she would consent, but at last his reasoning and his pleading and his passion overcame her. And, absorbed in this new joy, in the trembling, blissful thoughts of the fulness of life that was to come, the dream face vanished, swallowed up in the reality of her happiness.

She saw it no more till the night before her wedding-day. Then it seemed to have a slow, mocking, triumphant look in the steady gaze of its burning, sombre eyes.

CHAPTER III.

"ARE you not glad you took my advice, Violet, and came abroad with me instead of moping yourself to death in that dismal old house of yours?"

"Very glad," she answered with a little grateful smile.

"And you are happy, sweetest?"

"Almost too happy, dear. It is too good to last."

They were quiet, each full of silent love for the other. They had been abroad for eight months, and had not yet wearied of this protracted honeymoon. During the whole of that time, Violet's peace had not once been disturbed by the vision of that nightly visitor. She was almost disposed, looking back at her terror through a long, dim vista of happy, golden days, to laugh at it herself. But she had suffered too much to even care to think of it at all. It was past—it was gone.

They had wandered through Switzerland and France; they had made a leisurely tour through Germany, and now they were to finish up their long holiday with a glimpse of romantic Italy. Edwin

had a fancy for seeing Rome and the Carnival.

A week later, and they stood at the window of their hotel, gazing out on the strange motley crowd, with their odd dresses, their painted faces—every eccentricity that human beings could devise finding a place in that curious throng. Violet and her husband stood side by side, laughing lightly at it all.

"What guys people can make of themselves!" she said. "I never could have believed it if I hadn't seen it with my very own eyes."

"You will have something to tell your poor old dad about when next you write home," he said, slipping his arm round her waist.

They stood silently for a moment looking at the strange scene. A painted cart was going slowly by, drawn by great sleek oxen with gaily gilded horns. They had wreaths of scented flowers flung round their soft necks; the inhabitants of the car were fantastically dressed in the garb of Neapolitan peasants, and they wore nodding pasteboard donkeys' heads upon their shoulders. The effect was grotesque in the extreme.

"What should we say to all this folly and nonsense in sober England?" he asked, laughing.

She made no response, except by leaning heavily against him, and he turned to look at her in some surprise. She was deadly white.

"Look!" she cried in a perfect frenzy of terror, pointing with her finger at the seething crowd below. "There it is again! The face! the face!"

He looked hastily in the direction where her finger pointed, but could distinguish nothing amid that moving mass of masks and faces.

He turned again to Violet to chide her vivid fancy. She had fainted.

In the midst of the multitude of moving beings, she had clearly distinguished the face of the man who had haunted her previously. It seemed to have sprung forth in all its pallid clearness, and to her the gay crowd melted away for a moment, leaving her face to face, soul to soul, with this man. His eager, burning, sombre eyes sprang to meet her gaze, and held her spirit in some magic spell.

When she recovered she found herself lying on the sofa with Edwin kneeling by her side, and the scent of eau-de-cologne in the air.

"Are you better?" he asked her anxiously.

She did not answer for a moment. Then she made an attempt to struggle into a sitting posture. He gently prevented her.

"Lie still, dear," he said. "It was the heat of the room that made you faint."

He hoped for a moment that she had forgotten the cause of her illness.

"It was not the room," she said, speaking with some difficulty, a tense expression of horror dilating her dark eyes. "It was the face again! Oh, Edwin, I thought I was free, and now—now I have actually seen him! I am so frightened!" She began to sob convulsively. "Just as I have seen him always—so pale and terrible, and his eyes!"—She shuddered. "How soon can we get away from here, Edwin?" she asked.

"Dearest Violet, you are not strong enough to go just yet. When you are better we will start for home. But you must not think you have seen the reality of your dream, that would be too absurd. It was just a little return of your old trouble, and it will go as easily as it did before."

"Ah, you don't understand," cried Violet despairingly. "Oh, I dare not stay here—in the same town with him! When I am better? I am better now, Edwin—I shall always be strong enough to get away from that. See!"

She struggled off the sofa, and made a few uncertain steps in the direction of the door, laughing weakly. As he caught her in his arms she fainted again. This time he carried her to bed and gave her a sleeping draught. When he saw her breathing lightly and regularly he returned to the sitting-room with a puzzled brow.

Was it only her vivid fancy, that amongst the crowd of grotesque faces she should recognise that mystic dream face that had haunted her so long—or had she seen some one who really resembled the vision? He could not tell, but he was uneasy at this return of his wife's hallucination. He fancied that he had battled with and slain it, and here it was raising its Medusa-like head again!

"Never mind," he thought patiently to himself; "love conquered it before, and love shall conquer it again. Violet has very highly-strung nerves."

An hour later, when he came back from another visit to his wife's bedside, he

found a telegram for him. It was to announce the death of his father, and urge his immediate presence in England.

He threw the telegram down, half stunned with the news, and the complications that might follow it. He must go to his mother at once. He was the only son and there were many things to be seen to. But what about Violet? He decided to tell her when she awoke. It was too late to start that day.

She awoke extremely weak, but calmer and more cheerful, and he deemed it prudent to break the news at once. The distressed look came over her face again.

"Must you go, Edwin?"

"Dearest, it is absolutely necessary. There is no way out of it. I only wish you were strong enough to come with me."

She clung to him terrified.

"You cannot mean to leave me, Edwin? In a strange place and alone."

"I can be there and back in four days, Violet. Four days is a very short time, and you will be quite safe. Nobody will run away with you, and I will ask the Markhams to come and see you often."

The Markhams were an English family who lived a short way off.

But Violet was not to be consoled.

"I shall die of terror, Edwin. You must let me come too."

"My own darling, you must be reasonable. How can you endure the hurry and bustle of rapid travelling when you are as weak and upset as this? A house of death would be the worst place possible to take you to. I could not think of it. You must be guided by me, Violet. I thought you would be more sensible."

He did not speak harshly, but his mind was too occupied with the thought of his father's death and his journey to England for him to be quite as tender and considerate as usual. And she needed it more.

She was resigned at last, and after saying that she should not put her foot outside the hotel till he came back, and that she should be abjectly miserable and horribly frightened, she allowed him to depart. It is true she clung to him with passionate tenderness when they said good-bye, but she made no scene, nor did she shed a single tear.

After all, four days are not an eternity!

The landlord smiled slightly as he saw the farewell, and heard Edwin's recommendation of perfect quiet.

"These English are jealous husbands," he thought to himself, "but then they sometimes love their wives! The signora is very pretty. It is to be hoped she is always discreet."

Violet had determined to bear her husband's departure well, and she did so. It is true she was a little pale and heavy-eyed, and refused to leave the hotel to join any of the Markhams' pleasure-parties; but then what is more natural than that a young wife shall look distressed when her husband leaves her, and when her father-in-law has just died? The Markhams found such grief very proper and quite interesting. They went to see Violet once a day, and found her more cheerful each time. Every day brought her nearer to her beloved Edwin.

On the night he was to return she decked the room with flowers—great bowls of pale primroses and violets, her sweet namesakes—till it looked like a bower of blossoms. She paused at last, with her hands full of the scented petals, tired out.

The door softly opened and shut. She looked round—she had heard the approaching footsteps—and—behold! She was face to face with the man of her dream.

She sank back, the flowers still in her hand.

The burning eyes fastened themselves upon her face.

An hour afterwards Edwin Armytage entered the hotel. It struck him once that the landlord and the waiters looked at him rather curiously; but he passed them by and ran lightly up the stairs to their sitting-room. Some undefined and awful dread seized upon his soul as he saw that the room was empty. The carpet had quite a little track of tinted petals on it, the room was full of the sweet floral decorations. He took in with a pang the loving care she had spent in arranging this welcome for him.

He opened the door of their bedroom, expecting to find her there, with love shining from her sweet eyes. It was empty also!

Then he rushed like a madman down the stairs, and seized upon the landlord; the mark of his fingers on the latter's arm as he clutched it in the extremity of his anguish did not disappear for a week.

"Where is my wife?" he demanded hoarsely.

The landlord retreated a little before those feverish eyes.

"The signora went out half an hour ago, signor," he answered discreetly.

"Went out? With whom?"

There was a little crowd round them by this time, but Edwin did not heed their curious gaze.

"The signora went out with—with a gentleman," said Senesca, hesitating out of pure pity for this injured husband. "She may return soon," he added soothingly.

He knew the English when roused might be dangerous, and he had no wish to have tragedies enacted in his splendid hotel.

Edwin did not speak, but something in his eyes impelled Senesca to hurriedly tell him all he knew.

He was sorry for the loving husband whose wife had run off with another man!

"Signor, half an hour ago, a plain black carriage with two black horses drew up at the door. A gentleman sprang out, and went straight up the stairs to the signora's apartments. He seemed to know his way quite well," said Senesca, with a glance at Edwin to see how he was taking this, "and asked for no directions. Signor, in a few minutes the signora descended the staircase on his arm. She was closely veiled, and walked with difficulty. It seemed to me that she was pale and weeping. But she went of her own free will, and it was no business of mine to interfere. They entered the carriage, signor, and were driven rapidly away. I do not know in which direction."

Edwin's white lips had only one more despairing question to ask. He knew what the answer to it would be.

"What was he like?"

"Signor, he was tall and distinguished, with a pale face and strange, burning eyes. It would appear that no one in the hotel recognised him."

Edwin pushed the man aside and dashed out into the street.

"His wife has been unfaithful to him," said the landlord, with a little explanatory shrug of his shoulders to the bystanders. "These English are mad where they love. He will put a bullet through his brain,

And the signora looked so sweetly innocent. Who would have thought it?"

To-day, thirty years after the strange event took place of which I have written, there wanders over the surface of the earth a man with snow-white hair and restless, searching eyes. He has spent his life, his health, his fortune, in travelling from one place to another, ever seeking for what he will never find.

It is Edwin Armytage, and he is looking for the lost bride of his happy youth. But he will never find her. He is also looking for a man with a white face, black, lustreless hair, and burning, sombre eyes.

But he has never found him either, nor will he ever, for the mystery remains unsolved until this day, and the white-haired, restless man must find peace soon in the bosom of the quiet earth, wherein we all must sleep some day.

Only it is his prayer that he may find his Violet first.

In next week's Number will be commenced a New Serial Story, entitled

A VALIANT IGNORANCE.

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CHAPTER I. A TRUCE.

THERE was a good deal of west wind, and it swept across the rather characterless Hertfordshire county with the wild, soft rush peculiar to it, and so curiously suggestive. On either side of a road, which wound on and away white and deserted in the quiet of a lovely April afternoon, stretched field after field, divided by low hedges just clothed in their spring beauty.

Along the road there came a girl. She was tall and slender, with a graceful, elastic figure, and came on against the wind swiftly, with smooth, springy steps. Her face was very pretty, and it was very sure to arrest attention by reason of its curiously frank and unconscious display of character. Every mobile line from the little chin to the delicate arched eyebrows spoke of spirit which might express itself in many ways from self-will to self-devotion, ac-

cording to the leading of education and circumstances, but must evince itself surely in some form or other at every turn. The mouth was rather large but very sensitive, and at this moment, as it curved into a smile, very sweet; the nose was straight and rather short, with finely-cut nostrils, and the large, clear blue eyes revealed another characteristic of their owner. Nobody meeting their direct gaze could have doubted that the spirit within them was proud, or could have failed to imagine their capacity for the expression of scorn. The whole face was delicately coloured, and the hair, a little ruffled by the wind, was a bright brown. The girl was dressed simply, but with that faintness of detail which is the most subtle suggestion of wealth.

No other figure was visible upon the road; no other figure, no habitation even, was visible among the fields on either hand. And against the monotonous background

they afforded, the girlish figure stood out with a curious effect of loneliness—an effect which was somehow accentuated by the girl's obvious unconsciousness of it. Her pose and expression alike conveyed an impression that her evident enjoyment of the wind and the motion was instinctive and that her thoughts were otherwise employed; and not unpleasantly employed, to judge by the smile in the blue eyes. Turning a sharp curve in the road, she began to descend a long incline, her solitary figure shut in now by high hedges. The descent continued for perhaps a mile, when the landscape opened out again.

To the right and left the foreground was occupied by a large and finely-wooded park; in front the park was merged after about a quarter of a mile in gardens, beyond which, on a slight rising, stood a large house. It was of grey stone, and its severe Ionic front looked so incongruous as to be almost forbidding. Shut in alone by the green slopes surrounding it, with that peculiar lifelessness about it that so often characterises a great house seen from any distance, there was something strangely dreary about it; and as the girl, opening a little gate in the palings, turned into the park and began to move towards it, her loneliness seemed natural and harmonious.

She had looked about her not at all as she came along the road; but now as she walked across the soft park turf the thoughts that had occupied her apparently gave way, and the blue eyes glanced hither and thither with a look of bright, appreciative authority. She unlocked the gate leading into the garden with another key from the bunch that had supplied one for the gate of the park itself, and before passing through she stooped and gathered some daffodils growing close to the palings. Then she went on through the gardens to a door in the side of the house. She opened it, passed along a corridor and across a wide hall with a light, assured step to a room on the opposite side, into which a man-servant was just carrying tea. It was a drawing-room, occupying nearly the length of one side of the house, with four long windows in the wall facing the door, and two huge fireplaces, one at the end of the room, the other to the right of the door. In the former, in spite of the warmth of the day, a fire was burning, and near it in a large arm-chair sat a fair-haired little woman in black.

She turned as the girl came in, and received her with a hesitating murmur of welcome. She had a weak, plaintive face, and a fragile, helpless-looking figure, and as the girl stood looking down at her with a smile, they were a curious contrast.

"Is your head better, Marion?" asked the girl. Her voice was sweet and fresh, and a certain tender, pitying modulation which was rather that of strength for weakness than personal feeling made it irresistibly charming as she spoke.

"Yes, thank you. Oh, yes, much better," was the rather nervous answer, and then the girl turned to the footman, who was arranging the tea-things on a table near.

"Has any one called, Woods?" she asked carelessly.

And as the man answered briefly and respectfully and left the room, she sank into a low chair and began to busy herself with the teapot.

"Such a delicious afternoon, Marion," she exclaimed; "I wish you could have come with me. Look!" pointing to the daffodils which she had laid beside her on the table. "I picked those in the park. Aren't they sweet?"

The room was full of hothouse flowers, and the little woman addressed apparently preferred these to their humbler brethren; for she looked rather dubiously at the daffodils, though she was apparently by no means prepared to disagree with their admirer.

"Cake or bread and butter?" went on the latter lightly, rising with the cup of tea she had poured out, and as she did so the little woman rose, too, hastily.

"You really shouldn't," she protested hurriedly. "It—it's so wrong of me to let you wait on me! Your companion ought to wait on you, ought to pour out the tea, and save you all trouble. You pay me——"

"I pay you, if you will insist on remembering it, for your society, Marion. I pay other people to be my servants."

Having spoken, the girl put her hand on the other's shoulder and pushed her gently into her chair again, as she said, with a swift transition from the imperative to the reassuring which was very charming:

"How can we live together if we are not friends? And how can we be friends if we don't give and take? You chaperon me—I must be chaperoned, that is certain—and I take care of you. You must be

taken care of, that is equally certain. The money—oh, the money doesn't count!"

And with that sweeping assertion, the girl reseated herself and poured out her own cup of tea.

The dialogue was followed by a short silence. The little woman subsided into her chair with an inarticulate murmur of gratitude; the girl drank her tea, her eyes bright and reflective. At last her companion, feeling apparently that her position demanded of her something in the way of conversation, said tentatively:

"Did you settle about the cottages?"

The girl roused herself with a little start.

"Yes," she said. "At least, practically. I chose the site."

"Mr. Gaunt was waiting for you, I suppose. Was he very annoying?"

There was an instant's pause. The girl had taken off her hat and laid it in her lap, and now she clasped her hands behind her head, and laid it back against her chair.

"He has gone very thoroughly into the question of those cottages," she replied.

"And forced his knowledge on you as rudely as usual, I suppose?"

"I don't know," returned the girl vaguely. Then, apparently collecting her thoughts, she said, "I don't know that I think him exactly rude, Marion—not now, at least. He is abrupt, of course, but not rude, I should say."

There was a distinct note of reproof in the imperious voice, and the little woman's eyes widened in surprise. The conversation had evidently taken an unusual turn, and she was confused. Her tone was very diffident as she said, after a pause:

"You chose the site you originally intended, I suppose?"

The bright eyes were gazing straight before them with an abstracted ease, and they smiled as the girl answered:

"No; I chose Mr. Gaunt's site after all."

The little woman's lips parted in an expression of blank astonishment. She was evidently only restrained from an exclamation by uncertainty as to how such a proceeding would be received. Before she could think of anything sufficiently non-committal for expression the girl had risen and walked to the window. She looked out for a moment, and then strolled back again.

"The building is to begin at once,"

she observed. "Mr. Gaunt is to bring me up the estimates to-morrow. Well, Marion, I'm very dusty, and I shall go upstairs, I think."

She gathered up her daffodils, and as she turned to leave the room the footman came in again with three letters. She took them and glanced at their addresses.

"One for you, Marion," she said, handing the letter to the little woman, "and two for me. An invitation to the Grange, obviously, and—I don't know who the other is from. I'll take them up."

She passed out of the door into the hall, and up the wide staircase with the letters and the flowers in her hand, and a step and a carriage which made of her stately surroundings the natural setting for her youth and freshness.

The step and the carriage she had been born with. The surroundings had been hers for six months only.

Valentine Clinton had no remembrance of her father, who had died when she was still a baby, and scarcely any of her mother. Her mother's aunt, Miss Alethea Hilyard, when that mother married again and went with her husband to India, took temporarily a mother's place in Valentine's life. A year later, Valentine's mother died, and Miss Hilyard took that place for good. The two had lived together until, quite suddenly one autumn day, just after Valentine's twenty-first birthday, Miss Hilyard was struck down with paralysis and died, after lingering for a few days, unconscious even of the tears of the girl she was leaving so desolate. It was in the week succeeding those bitter days that news which, for the time, only served to accentuate her sense of loss and loneliness, was broken to Valentine by her aunt's lawyer.

Old Miss Hilyard, dying of paralysis, already to all intents and purposes beyond the changes and chances of this life, had succeeded to a large landed property in Hertfordshire. The chain of circumstances which had brought the property to her, involved that complete extinction of direct heirs which sometimes occurs in old families. Miss Hilyard being dead, the only creature with a claim on the estate was her great-niece, Valentine Clinton.

So Valentine, at twenty-two, had found herself the mistress not only of her own actions, great and small, but also of a large country house, with garden, park, and home farm, and of an income of some ten thousand a year.

In the early days of her loneliness and

grief, she refused to consider her inheritance. But as the slow months took from her grief its absorbing smart, the constantly recurring details connected with her estate began to interest her. This change of mental attitude came about with no consciousness on her own part. She woke up to it suddenly, and announced a determination with a high-handed impetuosity. She was going to live in her own house, and look after her own property, she stated; she would have a chaperon; and that point conceded, there could be no possible objection to her taking her own way on every other. Even had there been countless objections there was no one with authority to raise them. The old friends with whom she had spent the months which had elapsed since her aunt's death were on the point of giving up their London house to live abroad, and the plan seemed to them, on the whole, as good as any other.

Barely two months passed after her announcement of her intention, before Valentine was established with a retinue of servants and a chaperon, to reign in person over her own estate.

In no instance, in the whole course of the preliminary proceedings, had Valentine acted more characteristically than in her choice of her chaperon. The very first candidate for the position was a little woman of about thirty, whose husband had recently died, leaving her absolutely penniless. Mrs. Carryl was rather delicate, very helpless, entirely incapable of affording mental support to herself, much less to any one else; her opinion was always at the mercy of the last speaker; she was, in short, as Valentine's friends assured her with one accord, the very last person for the post.

But Valentine never considered Marion Carryl from that point of view. The shrinking, timid little woman, so pathetically and so obviously incapable of fighting with the world, touched the girl's generous heart; and she declared that she should see no one else. To all remonstrances she replied that it was not necessary that her chaperon should be old; that she did not want a woman with whom she was sure to quarrel; and that she meant to make Mrs. Carryl very happy.

And as far as the limitation of a feeble nature allowed she had made Mrs. Carryl happy. It had been a very uncertain, nervous species of happiness at first. Having endeavoured to nerve herself for the

battle of life by an exaggerated conception of the hardship and general contumely which it was to involve for her, the little woman found Valentine's ways painfully bewildering at first. Even after six months' constant intercourse, sudden misty realisations of their respective positions would rise up and confuse her. But as a rule the shallow current of her emotions flowed now as placidly as her days were passed. Nothing was asked of her in the way of independent action or opinion; and submission to Valentine on every point was rapidly becoming second nature to her.

Left alone in the large drawing-room, on Valentine's departure, Mrs. Carryl took up some delicate lace-work, calling for no originality in the worker, and began to work with painstaking content. She had not been so occupied, however, for more than a quarter of an hour when the door was opened with an impetuous movement, and Valentine, her cheeks flushed and her eyes shining with excitement, reappeared, an open letter in her hand.

"Marion," she cried, "oh, Marion, what do you think?"

CHAPTER II. THE TRUCE SUSPENDED.

MRS. CARRYL let her work fall on her knee, and looked up in bewildered expectancy. Sudden calls upon her were apt to confuse her, and her mind, for the moment, was more or less a blank. Without waiting for any response, however, Valentine went on, her sparkling eyes fixed on the letter in her hand.

"This—this letter is from Mr. Dorrisant, Marion!" she said, with a great excitement in every tone of her voice. "Mr. Dorrisant! He is actually in England, and he wants to know if he may come and see me! Oh, isn't it delightful!"

The words apparently conveyed no comprehension of the case to Mrs. Carryl. As a matter of fact they only increased her bewilderment.

"Delightful!" she echoed, obediently but feebly. "Who—who is Mr. Dorrisant, Valentine?"

"Who is he!" exclaimed Valentine, flashing a look of brilliant astonishment on her. "Marion, don't you know?"

Mrs. Carryl shook her head deprecatingly.

"I'm afraid not," she hesitated.

"What an extraordinary thing!" exclaimed Valentine. "I suppose I took it

for granted that you knew. He's my stepfather!"

"Your——"

Her amazement was too much for her slender resources, and Mrs. Carryl's small voice died away, leaving her looking up at Valentine, her face a very embodiment of blank astonishment. Valentine laughed, a ringing laugh eloquent of excitement.

Mrs. Carryl's eyes dilated with the effort of grasping the idea thus presented to her; she let her work fall from her knee to the floor, while she continued to gaze into the laughing, glowing face which was looking down at her; and then she said slowly and faintly:

"Your stepfather, Valentine?"

"My stepfather, Marion!" echoed the ringing, girlish voice. "You didn't know I had a stepfather?" Valentine went on, with a dozen notes of interrogation in her voice. "What a very extraordinary thing! My father died, you know, when I was a tiny baby, and my mother married again when I was four years old—married Mr. Dorrisant. He took her away to India at once; that was why I went to auntie"—her voice softened and lingered tenderly over the word—"and then, before they had been married quite a year, mother died, and auntie kept me altogether."

There was a pause; and then Mrs. Carryl originated a question:

"Is Mr. Dorrisant a soldier?" she said tentatively.

"No, he's not," was the quick answer. "I don't quite know what he is, or why he lived in India. He went to America afterwards."

"It is some years since you have seen him, I suppose?"

Valentine laughed again brightly.

"It's—let me see—it's seventeen years!" she cried. "When auntie wrote and asked him to let her have me—after mother died, I mean—he settled not to come back to England. Several times since then he has thought of coming, but it has always fallen through, and for the last two years I've quite lost sight of him. Now—oh, isn't it too delightful?"

Mrs. Carryl's mental processes were not rapid, and such a shower of surprising facts retarded them considerably.

"You—you don't know him, then?" she said confusedly.

"Well, I suppose, in the ordinary sense of the word, perhaps I don't," said Valentine, beginning to walk restlessly up and down the room as though her excitement

demanding an outlet. "But I feel as if I did. In the first place, you see, he was my mother's husband, and I can't think of her without thinking of him. Then I've got some letters he wrote me when I was little—such charming letters, Marion—and the letter he wrote to tell me of my mother's death, and the letter in which he gave me up to auntie. Only a very nice man could have written them. I should have written to him when—last year, you know—if I had known where he was. I was so very sorry when he left off writing to me."

She paused and glanced again at the letter in her hand, and in no way sensible of a blank, though Mrs. Carryl's ideas were not sufficiently coherent to allow of her making any further comment, she continued:

"And now he says that he is in England for a few months with a young ward of his. He says he will come on any day on which it will suit me to see him. Any day! He must stay, of course; a day is nothing!"

She moved swiftly across the room, and sitting down at the writing-table, began to write rapidly, as though the action were the natural and inevitable climax of her excitement.

In Valentine Clinton, as in most finely-tempered natures, the instinct of loving and the desire for love were alike strongly developed. Her heart was as warm as her temper was imperious, and since the death of her aunt her affection had been thrown back upon herself, producing in her a sense of want which she tried in vain to satisfy. It had been an unconscious instinct in this direction that had attracted her to Mrs. Carryl. But the sense of protecting affection with which Mrs. Carryl inspired her left the want untouched.

The sense of kin was likewise very strong in Valentine, perhaps because she was so singularly lonely.

The kinship existing between stepfather and stepdaughter is an undetermined quantity depending on individual decision, on circumstances, and on sentiment. Circumstances had done their best to neutralise all kinship between Valentine and her stepfather, but sentiment had triumphed over circumstance. Valentine's mother was the girl's most tender memory, a memory which had grown with her, gaining a deeper beauty year by year as she grew from childhood to girlhood, from girlhood to womanhood; a memory enshrined in her heart, apart even from the

memory of the aunt who had been everything to her, only not her mother. Her dead mother constituted for her, between herself and the man that mother had married, a bond alight indeed, but in no-wise to be broken.

The thought of him had been a continual interest to her, an interest all the keener for being always unsatisfied. The vague personality she had unconsciously created in her mind possessed for her the attraction of a magnet. That its original should some day come to England had been a day-dream with her ever since she could remember.

She dashed off her letter; a curiously unconscious realisation of the actual man as a stranger to her made it a few gracious, impulsive lines of pleasure and invitation; and throughout the evening that followed her excitement subsided not at all.

And her first words to Mrs. Carryl on the following morning, showed what her earliest waking thought had been. She spoke little as they sat together throughout the morning, but such words as came from her all had reference to the same subject, and the pauses that intervened were obviously filled in with happy, expectant meditations.

It was about twelve o'clock when one of these pauses was broken by the entrance of a servant.

"Mr. Gaunt is in the library, if you please, miss," he announced.

Valentine roused herself. She rose and lingered for a moment, lightly touching the glass of flowers which stood on a little table at her hand.

"He has brought the estimates for the cottages, I suppose!" she observed. "I shan't be very long, Marion," and then she turned and went out of the room.

A quarter of an hour passed, half an hour, three-quarters of an hour, and Valentine had not returned. Mrs. Carryl worked placidly, her mind as unoccupied as it is possible for the mind of a human creature to be; and becoming aware that she had made great progress, the inference forced itself slowly upon her that Valentine had been some time gone. She had just realised the fact, and was looking with surprise at the strip of lace which had revealed it, when the door opened again and Valentine came in, followed by a young man. She was looking unusually bright, holding her dainty head higher than usual, but with a pretty softness about her mouth.

"I have brought Mr. Gaunt to have some lunch, Marion," she said.

There was a shade of imperiousness in her tone which the simple statement hardly seemed to call for, and it gave a tinge of unusualness to the very ordinary circumstances—a tinge which was accentuated by the obvious astonishment with which Mrs. Carryl became aware of the young man's presence. She rose hurriedly, dropping all her work, and shook hands with him with an uncertainty of greeting comic in its helplessness.

He was a tall, broad-shouldered young man, well-made and athletic-looking, moving brusquely, though he was evidently a gentleman. He had dark hair and a brown complexion, and he was not handsome, though the deep-set brown eyes were very good. The most noticeable point about the irregular features was their all-pervading air of vitality and energy, a certain vigour and impulsiveness which made his face, considered apart from his figure and manner, look less than his twenty-nine years. The same vigour expressed itself in his way of speaking even the few words with which he returned Mrs. Carryl's greeting.

Kenneth Gaunt had been the agent on the property which was now Valentine Clinton's for the last three years. Mrs. Carryl's astonishment at his appearance in Valentine's drawing-room was not wonderful, since during their six months' intercourse as mistress and man the name of each had been a very abomination in the ears of the other. The last owner of Templecombe had been an absentee; consequently until Valentine appeared upon the scene Kenneth Gaunt had gone his own way with no one to dictate to him. His way as an agent was a very good one; he was shrewd, hard-working, and honourable; and he liked to have that way. Like many another young man, whose intellect, though shrewd, is limited in range, he was prepared to say the last word with authority on every subject presented to his notice; and he had a superior contempt for women. His first impulse on hearing that Templecombe had passed to a mistress had been to resign his position on the estate. But the post was a good one, and after much vituperation of circumstances he had decided to stay on and "see if he could put up with her!" She might be a meek little girl who would be afraid to interfere, he hoped.

The results likely to ensue on the appearance of Valentine, proud, imperious, and moreover starting with one of those

prejudices so hard to eradicate, that an agent was never a gentleman, are easily imagined. Kenneth Gaunt had gone forth from his first interview with the new owner of Templecombe vowing that he would send in his resignation on the very next day. Valentine had repaired to Mrs. Carryl to announce that of all the intolerable beings it had been her misfortune to meet, her agent was the very king, and that she should certainly dismiss him.

Resignation and dismissal, however, alike hung fire. Kenneth Gaunt discovered that it would be sinful to let "that girl" ruin the property, as she would inevitably do, if she was left to herself. Valentine told Mrs. Carryl loftily that "the man" knew his business, although he was personally so offensive. Hostilities on either side had been spirited and unflagging, and Mrs. Carryl, at least, had been quite unprepared to expect a truce—Valentine's words of the afternoon before having only bewildered her—when the combatants electrified her by their peaceful appearance in the drawing-room.

If her power of wonderment had not been already fully occupied by this, she might have found something to surprise her in Valentine's manner—it was a manner which Mrs. Carryl had never seen in her before—as she made a gesture towards the chair she wished Mr. Gaunt to take, and sat down herself, saying:

"Can you tell me anything about the Penroses, Mr. Gaunt? Has Mrs. Penrose decided?"

Kenneth Gaunt would have said, had he been asked, that his presence in Miss Clinton's drawing-room as Miss Clinton's agent was due in part to that toleration of her which his feeling for the welfare of the property rendered necessary, and in part to his determination to hold his own against what he stigmatised as "that girl's intolerable pride." He accommodated himself to the inevitable, and disguised his feelings with a skill which was by no means usual to him, as he took the chair pointed out to him; it was his habit to express himself with the utmost frankness, and to stand to his guns, to himself and to the world at large, with an obstinacy that was not without an inner fibre of genuine, if misapplied, strength.

Her question referred to the family of one of the tenants on the property who had recently died, leaving a widow and several children. Kenneth Gaunt wished that the eldest son, a lad of seventeen,

should try his hand at working the farm; his energetic arguments had overcome the fears of the boy and his mother, and his manner of announcing their decision to Miss Clinton was ringing with the hopefulness with which he had tried to inspire them. Robert Penrose's enthusiasm had been difficult to fire. Miss Clinton's was another matter.

Mrs. Carryl, who had never known a suggestion advanced by either Valentine or Kenneth Gaunt pass uncontradicted by the other, listened in silent amazement as the former responded instantly to his explanations, making common cause with him in arranging for her young tenant. Her sympathy apparently mollified her sworn foe, for Robert Penrose's affairs led to other topics, and he talked and listened during lunch eagerly, if now and then with an involuntary touch of that lordliness natural to him when talking to a woman.

And Valentine never resented his authoritative demeanour. On the contrary, she absolutely consulted him, and yielded to his opinion on more than one occasion. They were in the midst of an animated discussion on horses and riding, Valentine having expressed a wish for a saddle-horse, when she said suddenly:

"I wonder whether you could get me a horse at once, Mr. Gaunt—in the course of a day or two, I mean! Two horses, one for myself and one for a gentleman. My stepfather is coming to stay with me."

Kenneth Gaunt was in the act of laying his dinner napkin on the table, lunch being by this time over. He stopped suddenly, his hand outstretched.

"I beg your pardon," he said blankly.

Valentine laughed.

"The idea of my having a stepfather seems to be quite electrifying!" she said gaily. "I shall begin to find it electrifying myself soon! Mr. Dorrisant is coming to England for the first time for seventeen years. We must show him the country, of course, and it would be a pity not to take the opportunity of having some one to ride with me. You will see about the horses, Mr. Gaunt!"

Perhaps the fact that she was giving an order restored to her voice the imperiousness which had vanished from it; or, perhaps, the mere fact of receiving an order brought back their mutual relations to Kenneth Gaunt's mind; perhaps it was some other cause yet that brought about the change. But his manner altered suddenly, and became stiff and abrupt.

"If you wish it," he said shortly. "Do you wish me to meet Mr. Dorrisant's individual tastes in horseflesh? Will he be with you for long?"

Valentine smiled. She was not thinking now of Kenneth Gaunt, or of his manner, and perhaps the young man was aware of that fact. Something, certainly, enhanced his displeasure.

"I wish I could tell you!" she said. "I hope so! And I wish I could tell you anything about his tastes, either. But I have not seen him since I was four years old. Perhaps you know that my mother died when I was quite a little girl, and I have not seen Mr. Dorrisant since her marriage."

"What is Mr. Dorrisant's profession, may I ask? And where is he coming from?"

As a clue to the expected arrival's taste in horses, which was all that could be said to concern him, the details he demanded were decidedly far-fetched. Kenneth Gaunt had no right whatever to ask for them, and knew that he had no right. It was one of the hot-headed speeches that he was apt to make and to decline to regret. But Valentine had, apparently, no desire to break the peace that had reigned between them, and though she paused, and drew up her head slightly, she answered him simply enough.

"I cannot tell you his profession," she said. "I have never known it. He comes from America."

She rose as she spoke, and Kenneth followed her example, pushing back his chair with a brusque gesture.

"An unknown gentleman, of unknown profession, hailing from America! Pardon me, Miss Clinton, but I imagine that he is known to some of your friends!"

For no discernible reason, Kenneth Gaunt was completely losing his head. A prejudice against Miss Clinton's unknown stepfather had evidently taken sudden possession of him—a prejudice violent as it was absolutely irrational. The introduction of Mr. Dorrisant's name into the conversation had changed its tone certainly, and had undoubtedly relegated Kenneth himself into a secondary position in Miss Clinton's thoughts; but that was, on the surface, no good reason for his filling in the outline presented to him in the worst possible colours.

Valentine turned, her colour heightened, her head very erect.

"I don't——" she began haughtily.

Perhaps her manner exasperated him, but Kenneth interrupted her, and interrupted her rudely.

"Oh, of course it does not concern your agent!" he said. "It was an unpardonable liberty, no doubt. I only wondered what, as a matter of fact, was known of this unknown gentleman."

"My mother married him," returned Valentine very coldly and very proudly.

A moment or two later and he had taken his leave in the fewest possible words, responded to with monosyllabic haughtiness. The harmony of the past hour, the slow growth of inharmonious months, had been wholly destroyed in a few minutes.

CHAPTER III. THE DAY-DREAM REALISED.

"By the six-thirty, Marion. So they will be here at about seven."

Breakfast was just over at Templecombe, and Valentine was standing by the mantelpiece, her graceful, spirited figure outlined against the background of its dark oak. She was looking very bright, very happy, very charming.

"Shall you go to meet them?" asked Mrs. Carryl.

"Certainly not!" was the decided answer, and then, as a footman appeared in answer to the bell, Valentine added to him: "The waggonette is to meet the six-thirty train at Templecombe this evening. And tell Wilson"—Wilson combined the function of head-footman and butler—"that I shall want to see him in half an hour."

Four days had passed since Valentine had received that first letter from her stepfather. Her answer to it had been followed by a note from Mr. Dorrisant, acknowledging her cordiality with frank dignity, explaining that he had with him a young ward whom he could hardly leave for more than a day or two alone in London, and asking if he might bring the said ward to Templecombe. Valentine's reply had been a ready invitation to the young man, and the evening of the present day was to bring with it the arrival.

The sense that the realisation of a long-cherished day-dream is imminent involves a sense of crisis, in which the details of that dream become preternaturally distinct, and wear a freshly exciting aspect.

Valentine, brought so close to what she had so long desired, was conscious of thoughts and feelings rising round it now for the first time. A personal colouring,

which it had wholly lacked as an intangible sentiment in her imagination, suffused itself now over the situation. The personality of the man who was soon to become a reality instead of an ideal for her—the personality for which she had been content to substitute a shadow—had suddenly become of vital interest for her.

It was little wonder that as the morning passed she grew always more restless, and incapable of continued occupation. And at last, at about three o'clock in the afternoon, she announced that she should go for a walk.

"I shall go and see Mrs. Penrose, Marion," she said. "No, you shan't come with me; I don't want you to be tired this evening. You must help me entertain my guests!"

It was a lovely afternoon, and perhaps the sounds and sights about her drew her thoughts to some extent from the subject that had occupied them ever since she had waked that morning, or perhaps some other subject forced itself upon her. For as she came in sight of the farm of which Kenneth Gaunt had had so much to say three days earlier, some of the excitement died out of her eyes. With an involuntary gesture, her always erect little head was drawn more erect still.

She paid the visit she had proposed, talking to Mrs. Penrose and her son with that frank charm which had made her, even in the past six months, adored by her tenantry. Several times during the course of the interview she was assured by the boy, won from his diffidence into something like enthusiasm, that just what she was saying Mr. Gaunt had said. And on each occasion that proud little gesture recurred. And when she finally said good-bye, and turned into the road alone, her sensitive face settled into an expression which might have been described as wistful but for the proud lines about the mouth.

She walked on swiftly, and she had just come to a place where the road was met and joined by another, when she started, and a flush of colour came into her cheeks. Along the other road, so that their ways must inevitably converge, was coming Kenneth Gaunt himself.

He saw her at the same instant and flushed hotly; all the more hotly because he felt his colour rise, and it made him furious. He hesitated for an instant, and then, lifting his hat, he was about to shoot on ahead when Valentine said:

"Good afternoon, Mr. Gaunt. I want to speak to you about Robert Penrose."

It was the first time they had met since the day when he had lunched at the Hall, and Valentine's tone was very haughty. But something about her made of it the haughtiness of offence, which is a very different thing from innate haughtiness of temper, and which implies the existence of some feeling to be offended.

Kenneth stopped perforce. Being a gentleman, he was quite aware that he had put himself utterly in the wrong on their last interview, and that Miss Clinton's offence was just; being a singularly headstrong young man, to have put himself in the wrong led with him to a practical assertion that wrong was right, by means of a dogged refusal to acknowledge it as wrong. His mental attitude at the moment was one of great indignation with Miss Clinton. And about his resentment, as about hers, utterly as he would have scouted the idea, there was that which implied in its very heat the previous existence between them of some kind of unconscious sympathy.

Having signified as briefly as possible that he was at her service, Kenneth listened to what Valentine had to say—neither of them recognised the fact that it was of no immediate importance—with an air of dignified reserve; replying with a tacit assumption of an immeasurable gulf dividing them as mistress and man, which was ludicrously out of keeping with his expression of unapproachable offence. Nothing ludicrous struck Valentine. On the contrary, she began to wonder whether she herself might not be really to blame, her pride and her common sense alike struggling the while with the wonder. Under the influence of these conflicting emotions, having disposed of young Penrose, she offered a remark about the weather, uttered with a mingled defiance and hauteur. Kenneth Gaunt allowed the majesty of his demeanour to be slightly softened as he answered her, and they proceeded to discuss the climatic probabilities with a haughtiness on either side which, taken in conjunction with the subject of their discourse, was not without its comic element. The weather, however, was disposed of, and a pause ensued. Then Valentine, with her head very erect, observed, apropos of nothing:

"I am expecting Mr. Dorrisant this evening!"

If she had said in so many words, "I am expecting an apology from you," she could not have expressed that meaning more clearly than did the tones of her voice.

Nor could a more complete denial of a right on her part to such an apology have been conveyed in a volume than was conveyed by Kenneth as he answered loftily:

"Indeed!"

"He is bringing his ward with him, Mr. Geoffrey Cary," remarked Miss Clinton. Her cheeks were rather pinker than usual.

"Indeed!"

A sudden and violent reaction against her doubts of her own attitude; a sudden and violent resentment against what she called "his abominable attempt at putting her in the wrong"; took possession of Valentine.

"I am sorry that I can give you no more information about Mr. Geoffrey Cary than I can about his guardian!" she said, suddenly turning a shining pair of eyes on him. "I imagine that you will hardly care to make his acquaintance under such circumstances!"

In the sudden flash of genuine temper all details vanished for her, and she forgot that he was her agent, and only saw in him a man. Her oblivion created oblivion in him. He forgot that there was not necessarily any question of his making the acquaintance of his employer's guests; he forgot that Miss Clinton was his employer. She became for him simply the other party in a quarrel, who had lost her temper, and had thus given him the advantage which had hitherto been all on her side. He was more than willing to take up the glove thus thrown down.

"Since you ask me, I must say that I should not," he answered with a heat as sudden as her own. It was the outlet for much that he could not possibly have defined. If any one had told Kenneth Gaunt that the source of the temper which had risen in him so suddenly and unaccountably three days before was to be found in jealousy, he would have laughed the suggestion to scorn. "I certainly prefer to know something of a man before I make his acquaintance," he added very hotly.

"Is it not enough to know that Mr. Dorrisant is my relation?"

An impetuous young queen might have spoken much as Valentine asked this question. But Kenneth, impervious to the fire with which she spoke, seized instantly on the weak point in her reasoning.

"He is not your relation," he answered promptly. "There isn't even between you the pseudo relationship of long

familiarity. As a matter of fact, he and his ward are no more to you than any other total strangers. You are receiving them without credentials of any kind—taking them entirely on trust—and, pardon me, that's a thing no one but a woman would think of doing."

The words were spoken at random, and Kenneth himself did not believe them at the bottom of his heart. They were nothing but another flash of unreasonable and uncontrollable temper. But to Valentine they were an intolerable outrage.

"You are really too polite, Mr. Gaunt," she said proudly. "Perhaps when you know a little more of women you will understand that the credentials they value most are those that men, I suppose, are unable to appreciate. My mother's love and trust are Mr. Dorrisant's credentials."

She turned from him as she spoke, and moved away along the road. If she had looked back she would have seen Kenneth Gaunt turn in the opposite direction and walk off in a headlong fashion, as though he neither knew nor cared, in his anger, where he was going.

But Valentine did not look back. With her heart beating high with passionate indignation, she walked rapidly on towards Templecombe. Her most sacred sentiments had been outraged, and the result was to raise round them all her impetuosity in a very tempest of adhesion. With every mental fibre in burning revolt against Kenneth Gaunt, and drawn, as a necessary converse, towards her expected guest, she reached home, and went down to the drawing-room, looking in the clash and glow of her emotion so wonderfully full of spirit and life, that her beauty struck Mrs. Carryl with a vague surprise.

"They will be here directly, I suppose," said the latter.

But even as she spoke Valentine turned and silenced her with a gesture, standing in the middle of the room listening intently. There was a sound as of arrival at the great door; steps across the hall; and then the footman announced:

"Mr. Dorrisant; Mr. Geoffrey Cary."

Valentine saw a tall man enter the room; saw a face which was at once familiar and unfamiliar. She moved towards him with gracious, graceful dignity and welcome in her movement.

"I am very glad to see you," she said simply.

And her day-dream was a dream no longer.

CHAPTER IV. MAKING ACQUAINTANCE

THE lamps were lighted in the drawing-room; the curtains were drawn, and in the large fireplace a fire sparkled brightly. By the fire, in her favourite chair, sat Mrs. Carryl, working faithfully at her lace. At the other end of the room Valentine was seated at the piano. Her dinner dress was handsome and very becoming; but with that light on her face she would have looked lovely in anything.

Dinner was just over. The travellers' arrival had been succeeded almost immediately by the ringing of the dressing-bell; and the constraint of the first meeting had lasted only a few moments. It had been followed by an interval, during which Valentine had dressed, amid a hazy, feverish tumult of impression, expectation, and emotion. Then had come dinner, with its necessarily distant and ceremonial tone, and now, with the appearance of her guests in the drawing-room, Valentine was looking forward to that first tête-à-tête, which was to be the fulfilment of so much.

She had answered Mrs. Carryl's timidly enthusiastic comments on Mr. Dorrisant almost absently; she had strolled aimlessly about the room, finally seating herself at the piano, playing chords and scraps of melody, her eyes fixed always on the door. It opened at last, and her lips curved into a smile of welcome.

The two who came in were specimens of two distinct phases of manhood. The younger was, apparently, a boy, though, as a matter of fact, Geoffrey Cary was twenty-four. He had fair hair and a good-looking face, lighted by pleasant eyes; he was slight and evidently hardly fully developed in build. All the most salient features about his prepossessing appearance, indeed, were eloquent of youth, in contradistinction to the manhood—using the word in its more restricted sense—of the figure whose hand rested on his shoulder. Mark Dorrisant was singularly handsome. He was tall and distinguished in bearing, with an excellent figure and carriage. His hair was iron-grey at the temples, and a long iron-grey moustache hid his mouth. The firm, broad chin and the clear-cut jaw were very strong and good; the nose was aquiline, and perhaps a trifle too thin; but the charm of the face lay in the eyes. They were dark blue and singularly beautiful, with an unusually kind, direct gaze. They turned towards Valentine as their owner entered the room, and came

towards her, pushing the boy good-humouredly before him.

"This fellow wants to know," he said, "what relationship there would be between you and himself if he were really my son, instead of being my son by adoption only."

The tone in which he asked the question—kindly, and with a subtle acknowledgement of, but no insistence on, the bond between himself and Valentine—created, as if by magic, that sympathetic atmosphere for which she had been waiting. The smile deepened in her eyes, and then she turned them on the boy.

"We should be stepbrother and sister, shouldn't we?" she said happily.

Geoffrey Cary must needs have been an obtrusively disagreeable specimen of his kind, to have dissipated her prejudice in his favour. She accepted him at once with that frank confidence which was characteristic of her, for the sake of his guardian.

"I suppose we should," answered the boy eagerly. "It would have been awfully jolly."

Mark Dorrisant echoed Valentine's light laugh indulgently.

"You've had hard luck in the family line, haven't you, my boy?" he said. "It seems a shame, considering how overstocked some people are in the matter of relations, that others should have so few."

He patted the boy on the shoulder as he spoke, and perhaps his touch conveyed a hint which the boy's gentlemanly instinct was quick to understand. With a light-hearted assertion that "some fellows had all the luck," Geoffrey Cary turned, and, crossing the room, he sat down by Mrs. Carryl, and plunged into a confiding, boyish description of his own loneliness as far as relations were concerned; a description which so enchained Mrs. Carryl that, as she afterwards told Valentine: "I couldn't do any work. I was so wishing I was poor Mr. Cary's mother."

Valentine had not risen from the piano, and as his ward moved away Mark Dorrisant commented lightly on the music lying about. Valentine answered vaguely; her interest was all preoccupied. The position in which she found herself was so like, and so strangely unlike, what she had expected it to be. The sense of vivid personal interest, which had been growing in her all day, was consummated in her actual contact with the personality of the man before her. He was no longer a focus for sentiment, a link with the past in her

mind. He was a reality, an as yet unknown reality, and what he might prove on acquaintance was of the utmost individual moment to her.

He glanced at her now as she answered him, and then quietly took a chair facing her as she sat looking down at the keyboard; leaning back he fixed his eyes full on her face. There was a silence, and Valentine, as if conscious of his gaze, flushed slightly. At last he said gently:

"You are very like your mother."

Valentine started, and the colour rushed to her face in a flood, as she leant towards him, and said eagerly:

"Oh, do you think so? Do I remind you of her? I am so very glad. Auntie used to say that she did not think me like her."

"Your aunt knew you—your individuality. To me, at present, you are only your mother's child. Yes, I think you very like her."

"I am very glad."

She met his eyes again, her own soft with emotion, and then, in her respect for his share in the loss which was their common sorrow, she dropped them. Mark Dorrisant, however, took no advantage of her consideration; his gaze was fixed on her face until she lifted her head with a pretty characteristic gesture, imperious in its very graciousness, and said:

"I cannot tell you how pleased I am to see you here; to meet you at last. I have wished it very much."

"I have wished it, too," he answered instantly. "I have hoped often to have brought it about long before this. When I gave you up to your aunt as a little child"—he smiled at the figure before him in its girlish stateliness, and the smile and her response in kind seemed to bring them very near together—"I gave you up completely, as no doubt you have understood. As the world counts such, we have no shadow of a claim on one another—you and I! But there are ties that are not to be disposed of so summarily, are there not? You and I have too much in common. We must meet too often in the region of memory to be strangers in our hearts."

He had spoken very quietly, with no suspicion of sentimentality about his dignified manner. His eyes were fixed absently on distance as though he were uttering such simple matters of fact that her assent was a foregone conclusion.

And then, suddenly, Mark Dorrisant

turned to her with a cheery gesture of confidence and friendliness, and said frankly:

"So we stand on rather curious terms, don't we? Nothing but ideas to one another if we choose; a good deal to one another, perhaps, again if we choose. The first thing to be done, evidently, is to make one another's acquaintance."

He looked her full in the face as he spoke with a smile, and in his eyes for the first time there was undisguised curiosity—the curiosity which is a tribute rather than an affront. His words and his manner alike conveyed a tacit acknowledgement of her rights in the matter; a certain subtle homage to her womanhood, which was not without its effect on Valentine, little as she understood it. She smiled back at him, and there was a touch of condescension in her voice, quite irresistible in conjunction with its girlish tones and the impulsiveness with which she spoke, as she said:

"That is what I should like. You are in no hurry to go back to town, I hope? Are you in England for long? Do you know, I know absurdly little about you"—her face clouded slightly as she spoke, and the gaiety of her tone was, perhaps, a little forced—"I don't know where you live or what you do. Some day you must tell me all about yourself."

"Some day," he answered. "For the present, will my plans for the immediate future answer the purpose? I am in England, as a matter of fact, mainly in my capacity of guardian to that boy." With a slight gesture he indicated Geoffrey Cary, who was still talking to Mrs. Carryl. "His father was a dear friend of mine in Australia, enormously rich and singularly lonely. He left a fortune for Geoff in trust with me, and I undertook to bring the boy home and establish him in England. He is to come of age in the winter, when he will be three-and-twenty, and until his affairs are settled I have no plans of my own."

"I see," said Valentine. "Then you will be in London for another year at least. I am so glad. But I did not know you had lived in Australia."

"I have travelled a good deal," Dorrisant answered. "Yes, I shall be in England for another year at least—possibly longer. To settle a boy into a career in England isn't such a simple matter as poor Cary imagined."

He looked to her for sympathy—a landmark in their progress at which they had arrived by such natural and imperceptible degrees, that Valentine hardly realised

how far they had gone as she responded to his look.

"What kind of career?" she asked interestedly.

"Cary himself had some idea of Parliament and so forth. Geoff's own ideas are hardly solidified yet. He is a good fellow and a clever, though. It is very kind of you to let me bring him here."

"I am very glad to have him," returned Valentine impulsively.

"I shall be very glad for him to know you," said Geoff's guardian with a smile. "You are his first specimen of an English lady, do you know? If you will be kind to him I shall be very grateful. He is rather lonely."

"I am lonely, too," said Valentine, smiling also as she rose from her seat. "We ought to be friends." She paused a moment, facing Mark Dorrisant as he, too, rose. He was the taller of the two, of course, but in her pretty stateliness they stood on not unequal ground. She looked him full in the face for a moment, and then she held out her hand as if involuntarily, and said: "Perhaps I shall not be so lonely now."

He took her hand and held it.

"Take care," he said, smiling—and the warning was more convincing than torrents of protestation—"take care! Perhaps, after all, we shall not like one another."

"I think we shall," said Valentine. And then she led the way towards the fireplace.

"Marion," she said brightly, "what must we do to entertain our visitors to-morrow? I suppose the first thing to be done is to take them over the place, and then they will know its resources."

"It is a very large property, is it not?" said Mark Dorrisant carelessly. "You don't manage it yourself, I imagine? Have you an agent?"

Quite suddenly, as though the words brought back to her the scene of the afternoon, a wave of burning colour rushed over Valentine's face, dyeing her very throat crimson. Neither Mrs. Carryl nor Geoffrey Cary chanced to be looking at her, but Mark Dorrisant's eyes were upon her, and they were on her still as she bent her head suddenly over a bowl of flowers.

"Yes," she answered briefly.

CHAPTER V.

QUEEN VALENTINE'S KINGDOM.

"No, no, Geoffrey! Partridges on the first of September and grouse on the

twelfth of August. That's most important!"

It was a lovely May morning. On the lawn that led down to the park gates Valentine and Geoffrey Cary were sauntering up and down together, apparently waiting for something or some one.

Little more than a week had passed since Mark Dorrisant and his ward arrived at Templecombe, but that week had been wet, and a week of bad weather has much the same effect upon a party shut up in a country house as the same period of time spent upon a yacht is popularly supposed to have. With Geoffrey Cary Valentine was already on those semi-fraternal terms which are so pleasant an imitation of the real thing; treating him as though he were immeasurably her junior, receiving plenty of boyish devotion and giving in return—and giving it gladly in right of his position with regard to Mark Dorrisant—an impulsive liking which grew rapidly.

For all his superficial air of conventional good breeding, young Cary's knowledge of manners and customs essentially English was by no means complete, and it was an eager and totally unsuccessful attempt on his part to demonstrate to Valentine his acquaintance with the ways of English sport that had produced her laughing correction. He laughed, too, buoyantly.

"All right," he said, "I'll remember if I can. But it's awfully confusing, when one is used to shooting everything everywhere, always! It seems a simpler plan, too, on the whole, don't you think?" he added, laughing. "I'll get these things up, though. You'll help me?"

"Of course I will," she said, echoing his laugh. "It's not the most difficult thing you'll have to get up, Geoff, I think."

The boyish face looked suddenly more serious.

"No," he said. "If I go into Parliament——"

He broke off suddenly as their sauntering steps turned towards the house.

"There they are," he exclaimed.

Mrs. Carryl and Mark Dorrisant were coming towards them.

The tour of the estate, of which Valentine had spoken on that first evening, had not yet been accomplished. Apparently by the morning after she had proposed it, it had ceased to find favour in Valentine's eyes, for even when the weather did allow of their going out, she always had something to suggest in preference to a

walk about the grounds. To-day, however, she had come down to breakfast full of a proposal that they should take advantage of the lovely morning and go for a long walk across the park and round the home woods. They must go to-day, it had appeared. She wanted to see how the new cottages were getting on, and no other day would, or could, suit so well.

Templecombe was her kingdom; she reigned therein, princess in her own right. In this instance, as in every other, her proposition was adopted with degrees and styles of acclamation varying with the individual temperament of the acclamer.

"We've walked miles already," called out Geoffrey exultantly, as the newcomers drew near. "Isn't it a jolly morning?"

"Lovely," responded Mark Dorrisant, looking about him admiringly. "We could hardly have a better morning for inspecting your kingdom, Queen Valentine."

The smile and the gesture with which she turned to him; the very look with which their eyes met, for all its easy absence of constraint; told that the intimacy between them was by no means at so advanced a stage as the intimacy between Valentine and Geoffrey Cary. The cordiality between Valentine and her stepfather went deeper and meant more. Affection between them involved too much to be rushed at or lightly indulged. It was growing in Valentine day by day—growing all the more steadily and surely in that Mark Dorrisant never by word or look betrayed any expectation or made any demand. If the terms on which they stood to one another were strange, his demeanour made them no less delightful.

She smiled into his eyes now, and acknowledged the title bestowed upon her with a little bend of her head, as she answered gaily:

"I hope my domain will meet with your approval," and, turning, led the way towards the park gate.

The spirit of the bright spring morning seemed to be in her blood as well as in young Cary's. There was a vivid animation about her face and carriage that was not absolutely natural to her, and suggested something like excitement or nervous tension.

They passed out into the park, Valentine leading the way with Mark Dorrisant, Mrs. Carryl and Geoffrey—a not very well assorted pair—following, and for the first mile the conversation consisted

of two duologues. Valentine was full of gay talk and laughter; explaining the country round to her companion, telling him of her plans for the estate, asking his advice, and speaking frequently of "my agent, Mr. Gaunt." Mark Dorrisant was full of quiet interest, sympathetic and sensible, and their conversation had shown no signs of flagging, when, becoming gradually conscious that the talk behind them was less flourishing, Valentine, slackening her steps, made the conversation general. They were out of the park by this time, and their road skirted a gentle slope to the sheltered field which was the site of the new cottages. These new cottages had been a hobby with Valentine ever since she had come to Templecombe, and as they drew near the spot now she waxed quite eloquent upon the subject.

"I don't suppose there is much to see yet," she said finally; "but I hope they may have made a beginning. Oh, yes!" she continued delightedly, "they are really at work. How——"

She stopped suddenly. They were just turning in at what had once been the field gate, and before them on the rough track stood Kenneth Gaunt. He had evidently stopped abruptly on hearing her voice, but retreat was impossible for him. They were face to face.

For the moment, simple as the situation seemed, all Valentine's presence of mind seemed to forsake her. Perhaps she had had reason to believe that business would take her agent into the neighbouring town on that particular morning, and perhaps, consequently, it was sheer surprise that sent that crimson flood of colour over her cheeks. For an instant she hesitated. Then Kenneth, lifting his hat distantly, stepped off the track. The colour died out of her face; her delicate lips set themselves into a line of icy disdain; and acknowledging his salutation with the slightest possible bow, she passed him without a word or a glance. It was the first time they had met since the day of Mark Dorrisant's arrival.

"Who was that young man?"

Mark Dorrisant had dropped back, leaving Valentine to Geoffrey—to the young man's delight—and he put the question carelessly to Mrs. Carryl. Mrs. Carryl was quite as pleased at the change of partners as Geoffrey could be; the kindly courtesy of the man had won her heart during the past week, while the

boyish spirit which rose higher in Geoffrey, as he became familiar and at ease at Templecombe, rather startled her; and her desire to keep Mark Dorrisant by her, if anything so deprecating may be characterised as desire, made her quite loquacious.

"That is Mr. Gaunt," she said, "the agent. He is a horrid young man, Mr. Dorrisant, rude and overbearing, and everything dreadful." Then the correction she had received from Valentine—nearly a fortnight ago now—recurring to her mind, she added hastily and confusedly: "At least, Valentine used to think so, but I believe she doesn't now."

The walk home was a silent one. Valentine was apparently tired, for she spoke little, walking by Geoffrey's side, and letting him entertain her with a dissertation on a fiery bay mare he had broken in in Australia. She had contributed little to the conversation at luncheon when, that meal being over, Mark Dorrisant came up to her as she stood looking rather listlessly out of window. He and she were alone together in the room, and he said, with a smile:

"All pleasant things come to an end, unfortunately. I am going to bring that fact forcibly home to Geoff by writing to our people in London to expect us on Friday." Then, as she started and turned to him quickly, he added: "We came for a week, you know."

"You will stay longer than that, I hope," cried Valentine impulsively. She seemed with the words to light up curiously, as though they involved some heat of feeling other than appeared on the surface. "You are not absolutely obliged to go so soon?"

"Not absolutely obliged, perhaps," began Mark Dorrisant slowly, his eyes upon the pretty, flushed face.

"Then stay," she said impetuously, stretching out both her hands to him. "Don't go away just when we are beginning to know one another. You said we might be so much to one another if we chose, and I think we do choose. I wanted to like you for my mother's sake. I want you to like me now on your own account, as well as on hers. I haven't any one belonging to me, and—I think she would be pleased."

She had spoken rapidly, with an unreserved advance which she had never shown to him before, and which expressed itself now with a vehemence, strangely touched with defiance—defiance of herself

or of somebody else. Tears stood in her eyes and choked her voice as she finished, and her face was pale and quivering. Mark Dorrisant looked at her for a moment more, holding her hands in his, his eyes deep and tender. Then he said gravely:

"I think she would."

He pressed her hands gently, and as he released them she turned and went swiftly out of the room. Valentine was crying.

The question of Mark Dorrisant's departure with his ward was tacitly understood to be settled, and the little scene to which it had given rise marked the beginning of a new phase in the relations between Valentine and her stepfather. Valentine's little outburst of emotion was never repeated; but when they met again the manner of each to the other was subtly altered. It was to Valentine as though a period of probation were over. Free now to indulge her impulsive love-loving temperament, having satisfied alike the demands of reason and of her own innate dignity; thrown for the first time with a man older than herself, whose claim upon her affections—while it still remained a claim—was alight enough to make her yielding of them a distinct pleasure to them both; and finding in that man a personality that charmed her, it was not surprising that her affection for Dorrisant grew day by day. It abated not a jot of her imperious wilfulness; indeed, one of her stepfather's charms for her, little as she understood it, lay in his tacit recognition of her independence. But she grew to rely on the thought of his unexacting affection, and his mere presence in her life became a support where any attempt to influence her would have repelled her as a chain.

Six weeks passed by and Mark Dorrisant and his ward were still at Templecombe. Mark Dorrisant made another attempt at bringing their visit to a close, an attempt negatived peremptorily in full family gathering this time. Thereupon he went himself to town for a few days on business, leaving Geoffrey Cary at Templecombe.

It was the morning after his return, and the house party of four, by this time as intimate as though the three principal members had been indeed bound together by ties of relationship, were together in the drawing-room. June had come; the long windows were open, and the room was full of summer scents and sounds. Geoffrey Cary sat on the window-sill, preparing to let himself slip down on to the terrace

below. His guardian was sitting in an attitude of indolent repose, hard by; and standing up between them was Valentine, holding a little jewel-case which Dorrisant had brought her from London. They had been laughing and joking together for the last hour, and even Mrs. Carryl, sitting with her lace-work a little further into the room, was hardly such a poor little shadow as usual. She had a present from London, too.

"Go along by yourself, you restless boy," exclaimed Valentine merrily, looking down at the laughing face turned up to her by Geoffrey, and closing a discussion peremptorily. "Pater isn't coming out yet; are you?" she added, turning to Dorrisant. How it had come about she could not have said; but gradually and almost insensibly to herself, hearing it used so constantly, Valentine had adopted the boy's name for his guardian. Her stepfather, in return, called her almost invariably by an abbreviation of the title he had laughingly given her.

"Queen Val's quite right, Geoff," he said now. "It is cooler here. Be off."

She turned to Geoffrey in laughing triumph, and as she did so the light fell full on her face. It had altered a little in the past six weeks. It was a shade thinner and a shade paler, and the smile on her lips did not touch her eyes. There was a wistful look in them, a look which had grown in them gradually, but which never left them. Her lips were parted to speak when the door was opened by a servant, who spoke to her in a low voice.

"Mr. Gaunt would be glad to speak to you, miss," he said.

Only one pair of eyes noticed the curious momentary stillness that held the girlish figure. Only one pair of ears noticed the hardly perceptible pause before she said:

"Very well, Woods. In the library. Have a nice walk, Geoff," she added over her shoulder, as she moved away, and then, without turning her face again to the group in the window, she left the room. She went slowly across the hall, and opened the library door.

During the past six weeks she had not once seen Kenneth Gaunt. Necessary communications had been made by him in writing; her orders had been given through the same medium.

The constant intercourse of the previous six months, with its battles, and its truces, and its dawning peace, had been absolutely suspended.

Kenneth was standing by the window as she opened the door. He turned quickly, and bowed without speaking. She merely inclined her head, and waited while he produced a paper from his pocket. Both the young faces were pale and set, with lines of unbending haughtiness and indifference.

"I am sorry to trouble you," he said coldly, "but this paper needs a word of explanation before you sign it."

She bent her head again, listened while he gave the explanation, and then signed her name without comment.

"That is all?" she said distantly, as she handed him back the paper.

"Thank you, that is all," he answered in the same tone. "I fear I may have to trouble you on the same subject again next week."

He bowed again and left the room.

Mrs. Carryl was alone in the drawing-room when Valentine returned to it.

"They are both gone out, after all," she explained. "Mr. Dorrisant is so kind, isn't he? He can't bear to say no to Mr. Cary. And there is a note for you, Valentine. A groom from the Chase brought it just now."

Valentine made no answer. She was looking pale and cold in spite of the June sunshine, and she took up the note and began to open it absently. She read it through and then turned and walked to the window, standing there with her back to Mrs. Carryl as the latter said:

"Is it a note about the dinner-party, Valentine? I hope it is not a disappointment."

The dinner-party in question was a large one to be given by Valentine on that day week—an event in the quiet country life at Templecombe.

Valentine did not answer instantly. She was looking vaguely out over the garden.

"Yes," she said at last. "Frank Dene can't come."

"Mr. Dene!" exclaimed Mrs. Carryl. "Oh, how very unfortunate! You must have another man, I suppose. Whom shall you ask?"

"Mr. Gaunt," said Valentine.

Her tone was so conclusive that Mrs. Carryl's amazement was only expressed in her face.

CHAPTER VI. HOSTESS AND GUEST.

IN the drawing-room at Templecombe some fifteen people were scattered here

and there. It was within a few minutes of half-past seven, and in the middle of the room, with the sunset light of the June evening full upon her, Valentine was standing.

Perhaps because of the peculiar interest attaching to her, girl as she was, as sole mistress of that great house; perhaps because her manner sat so delightfully upon her girlishness, Valentine never appeared more charming than in the capacity of hostess. To-night, dressed in pale pink silk, with her lovely eyes brighter and her cheeks a shade pinker than usual, and with an added touch of graciousness about her that seemed to come of some undefined excitement, she was irresistible. She was listening prettily to the ponderous compliments of an old gentleman, when the footman announced:

"Mr. Gaunt!" and she turned quickly.

In a formally-worded note Mr. Kenneth Gaunt had accepted Miss Clinton's invitation for June the twenty-first. And why Mr. Kenneth Gaunt had taken that course any one looking attentively at his face as he followed his name into the room would have been puzzled to say. For it was the face of a young man at war with himself and his surroundings, and very thinly concealing his sentiments under a veil of stolid indifference.

"How do you do?" said Miss Clinton, holding out her hand.

"How do you do?" returned her guest. His expression grew a shade more stolid as he shook hands. "I hope I am not late," he added abruptly, his gentlemanly instincts dominating his evident determination to preserve his neutrality by silence.

"Not late, but the last," returned Valentine. "You are to take in Miss Meredith, please. You know her, I know, so I will introduce you to my stepfather, Mr. Dorrisant, before I arrange the rest of the people. You will be at his end of the table."

She turned, and Kenneth followed her perforce across the room. She did not address her stepfather as usual, but touched him lightly with her fan to attract his attention.

"I want to introduce Mr. Gaunt," she said. "Mr. Kenneth Gaunt—Mr. Dorrisant."

And as Mark Dorrisant held out his hand to Kenneth with his pleasantest smile and a cordial "I know you by report already, Mr. Gaunt," she turned to her

duties with a smile and a light on her face.

And the smile and the light remained on her face during dinner. She was too much occupied to glance often at her stepfather's end of the table, and on the few occasions she did do so, Kenneth Gaunt chanced to be hidden from her by the dress and decorations of a large old lady who was his right-hand neighbour.

Had she seen his face the smile might have vanished. But Valentine Clinton had still a great deal to learn, especially on the subject of prejudice.

Templecombe was a musical neighbourhood, and Valentine was in demand not only as hostess but as musician. If she glanced towards Kenneth as he came back into the drawing-room in isolated majesty, she failed to observe in the movement and excitement of the moment that his general demeanour was dangerously suggestive of an overcharged thunder-cloud.

There had been a good deal of music, and she and Geoffrey had sung two duets together when, on the conclusion of the last of these, she laid her hand familiarly on the young man's arm, and said to him, low and rapidly:

"I want to introduce you to Mr. Gaunt. Sing one more song and then come with me."

Geoffrey assented, and a few moments later he was following her down the room to where Kenneth, still in voluntary isolation, was grimly turning over the leaves of a photograph book. For the last twenty minutes his eyes had been riveted to a large, dull photograph of the Colosseum. For the preceding quarter of an hour he had apparently derived solace from a concentrated inspection of a like photograph of the Forum.

"He looks rather blue," murmured Geoffrey boyishly as they approached.

"Perhaps he doesn't care for music," returned Valentine quickly. "You might take him out on the terrace, Geoff, dear, and give him a cigarette. It's getting late." She put her hand once more on his arm to emphasize her request, and drew him on until they reached Kenneth's side. "Mr. Gaunt," she said, still with that touch on Geoffrey's arm, "I want to introduce you to Mr. Cary, Mr. Dorrisant's ward."

Then, hardly waiting while her introduction was acknowledged silently by Kenneth, she moved away, pursued by the tones of Geoffrey's voice as he made his bright and boyish advances.

"I say," he began cordially, "what do you think of a turn outside? It's no end of a nice evening."

There was some more music after that—a song, to which Miss Clinton listened with a strong tendency on the part of her eyes to wander to the end of the room where the two young men were standing—and a piano solo, to which she apparently gave her whole attention. Just before it began, Geoffrey Cary and Kenneth Gaunt disappeared out of the window leading on to the terrace.

The two young men had not reappeared again, and there was a well-pleased light on Valentine's face as she stood once more near the middle of the room receiving the farewells which began to follow one another with increasing rapidity.

"Good-bye. Such a pleasant party. Thank you so much."

The words had been repeated until they suggested a decided want of originality in the speakers. Only one couple still remained—the complimentary old gentleman, who had a great liking for Valentine, and his motherly old wife. They were lingering over their last words, when the curtain over the window was hastily put aside, and Geoffrey Cary appeared, his face flushed and excited. He was followed closely by Kenneth Gaunt.

Evidently too hot to be stopped even by the presence of Valentine's guests, Geoffrey came up to Mark Dorrisant, and spoke in a voice of strong excitement.

"Mr. Dorrisant," he said, "will you have the goodness to confirm my word to Mr. Gaunt? He refuses to take it."

Instinct had made him lower his voice, so that the words were hardly heard by the others in the group. Only to Valentine the unusual formality of his manner of addressing his guardian was audible. But either his tone or some influence from his excitement struck oddly across Mr. and Mrs. Kenyon's farewells. There was an instant's dead silence as Dorrisant, with a quick glance from his ward to Kenneth, laid his hand in restraint on the boy's shoulder, and moved with him across the room. Mr. Kenyon, whose foible it was to know everybody's affairs, fixed an inquisitive eye on the three men standing apart, and began to tell Valentine a long story, evidently with the intention of seeing the affair through. His wife, however, frustrated his intention by saying good-bye immediately.

As they left the room the voices of the

two young men, barely restrained hitherto by the sense of their presence, broke into fierce altercation.

As though with the introduction of Mark Dorrisant into the dispute, he had deliberately abandoned the amount of reserve he had hitherto retained, bent now, evidently, upon indulging his temper to the utmost, Kenneth Gaunt was facing young Cary and his guardian, his head flung up, his features alive with defiance, his eyes blazing. The first words that Valentine heard distinctly were his.

"I shall not take back my words for you or for any man. I told you that I saw no reason for believing any statement of yours. I see no reason now."

Valentine took three or four quick steps and stood beside the group, her face as white and set as those of the two young men were flushed and working. Mark Dorrisant, his grave, unmoved face contrasting sharply with each extreme, made no attempt to interpose. He only watched his stepdaughter.

As Geoffrey turned to her excitedly, she lifted her hand and silenced him peremptorily.

"Be quiet, Geoffrey," she said in a low, vibrating voice. Then turning to Kenneth with a face that but for the flashing eyes might have been a mask of scorn cut in marble, she said in the same tone: "Mr. Gaunt, will you go?"

Without a word, without the slightest change in his expression, throwing at her a glance of fiery defiance, Kenneth walked straight out of the room.

CHAPTER VII. WAR TO THE KNIFE.

It was nearly eleven o'clock on the following morning, and Valentine was alone in the library. She was standing by the great writing-table chair, her fingers clenched round its straight back, her face little less pale than it had been on the previous night. She was waiting for Kenneth Gaunt. Exactly at eleven o'clock Kenneth Gaunt was announced.

He followed his name into the room, looking proud, defiant, dogged—if such a word can be applied to so much animation of temper. For an instant, before he bowed, their eyes met in a quick flash that was like a challenge on either side. Then Valentine, taking no notice whatever of his perfunctory salutation, began to speak. Her voice was low and tense, as though she controlled it with difficulty. Her slender

figure was held like that of a young queen, and the hold of her fingers on the back of the chair tightened.

"I sent for you," she said haughtily, "to say what no doubt you expect me to say. I no longer require your services as my agent. Three months' notice is, I believe, the usual thing. I give you such notice now."

"Very well," he returned defiantly. "As you say, it is what I expected."

Each had spoken to the other without any title—a recognition each of the other's personality which seemed to sweep away all surface conventionalities and bring them face to face, angry man and angry woman. As Kenneth finished speaking, Valentine took an involuntary step round her chair, with an impulsive, passionate gesture. The crust of ice over the fire was very thin; there were fissures in it already through which the glow could be seen.

"May I ask if you are prepared to apologise to Mr. Cary for your conduct last night?"

"No, I am not," returned Kenneth promptly, in a tone and manner which seemed to bring him more into the open field, daring and drawing out the fire.

"Are you prepared to apologise to me?"—she paused a moment, and Kenneth hesitated—"for your insult to him?"

"No."

Point-blank the negative came, and it tore away every shred of reservation from Kenneth's mental attitude. And as though her recognition of it was as gunpowder sprinkled on her fire, the thin crust of ice gave way. She confronted him, her delicate face white with indignation, her fingers tearing into shreds the handkerchief they held.

"You have behaved abominably—abominably!" she said, not raising her voice but speaking with such intensity that it seemed as though long pent-up emotions were at length finding a vent. "From the very first moment of my coming here you have thwarted and insulted me; you were rude and overbearing from the very first. I might have known—oh, I might have known that my first instinct was the true one. I had better have sent you away at once; but I got used to you, I began to think it might be only your manner; your manner!"

She laughed scornfully, and Kenneth, his face a dull red from brow to chin, took up the word hotly.

"My manner!" he cried. "What kind

of manner, in Heaven's name, do you expect from a man whom you treat as though he were the dirt beneath your feet? Sent me away! What do you think would have kept me here so long to be pestered and ordered about by a girl, but some sort of fool's consideration for the property?"

Valentine took no notice of his words, unless the curl of her lips and the added fire of her manner might be so construed.

"From the moment when I spoke to you first of my stepfather you chose to treat the subject contemptuously, with what conceivable excuse it is for you to say—if you can. I gave you the opportunity of apologising; you used it in your own peculiar fashion. Thinking that a personal acquaintance with Mr. Dorrisant and Mr. Cary might bring you to your senses, I asked you to my house last night, and introduced you to them. You honour my introduction by insulting my adopted brother!"

She flung the word at him worked up to a white heat of passion, drawn up to her full height, her face magnificent in its scorn and its denunciation.

She had put the case—as far as words went—justly, even moderately; there was no point in her words which he could impugn. In the wrong from first to last, incapable of defining his motives even to himself, and utterly without excuse, Kenneth, goaded, without knowing why, utterly beyond endurance, seized upon the only relief which presented itself—released the ungovernable fury that had been growing in him with every biting word she spoke.

"Adopted brother!" he said. "It's a pretty fiction, and we all know what it's worth. Adopted brothers are to be had for the asking from the Colonies by any heiress. As for insult, that's as you take it. If it's an insult to speak the truth to Mr. Cary—yes, I did insult him, and I'd do it again. I told him I saw no reason why I should take his word for anything. It's the truth; there is no reason. One takes a gentleman's word, certainly, but one requires first to know that he is a gentleman. I know nothing of Mr. Cary; I've seen nothing of him that I like. The only thing I do know about him is that I wish he'd been shot before he came here; and he'd better look out for himself next time I come across him!"

He stopped abruptly, panting fiercely for breath, defiance standing out in every feature, and for a moment the two young

faces, curiously similar in the fiery emotion of the moment, confronted one another in an eloquent silence.

Then Valentine, as though all her passion were culminating in its utterance, said to him one word: "Go!"

And, as he had done on the previous evening, Kenneth turned and went.

CHAPTER VIII. MR. GAUNT'S GUN.

It had been oppressively hot all day. The heat had given her a headache, Valentine said when she reappeared at luncheon, having been seen by no one since her interview with Kenneth Gaunt; and the sultry atmosphere had been an all-sufficient reason for her colourlessness.

And now, at nine o'clock in the evening, the storm was still in abeyance, but the signs of its approach were accentuated. A heaviness lay over everything. The sky was completely covered by lowering clouds. It was nearly dark, though the legitimate darkness of the June night was an hour off at least.

In spite of the darkness and the stillness, a slight, lovely figure against the setting afforded by the great silent house, and the wide stretch of hardly distinguishable gardens and park, Valentine was walking up and down the terrace in front of the drawing-room windows. She had come out there after dinner, and had seated herself with a book in an attitude of concentration which suggested a set purpose of fixing her mind upon the words before her. She had been alone then as she was alone now. Mrs. Carryl had succumbed to the electricity in the atmosphere.

"I can't bear to see lightning," she had explained, with a helplessly pathetic intonation in her voice that seemed almost to suggest that she expected some one to volunteer personally to ward off the coming storm for her. No one apparently being prepared to arrange this consummation, she had added, still more pathetically, that she felt "safer" in bed, and had thereupon been practically "put to bed" by Valentine before dinner.

Geoffrey Cary had started directly after breakfast on a fishing expedition in which he had arranged to join one of the guests of the previous evening, and had not put in an appearance at dinner-time. Valentine and her stepfather had had dinner together, and then Mark Dorrisant had spoken of taking a stroll in what could only by courtesy be called the cool of the evening.

It had grown darker and darker, and still Valentine had sat in that concentrated attitude, her eyes fixed on her book, apparently unconscious that she could no longer see to read it. At last, with an impulsive movement, she had risen, letting the book fall unheeded at her feet, and had begun to walk restlessly up and down the terrace, her hands clenched together, her face pale and set as it had been, when in repose, all day. She had been walking now for nearly half an hour, and her thoughts must have been far away from her actual surroundings, for she never noticed a figure coming towards the house through the gloom, and as a voice behind her spoke her name she started violently, turning with white parted lips and dilated eyes to find herself face to face with her stepfather.

"Oh!" she gasped, with a little hysterical laugh, "you frightened me, Pater! I didn't hear you!"

Their faces were only very indistinctly visible, but as if noticing the tremulousness of her voice, Mark Dorrisant stretched out his hand, and laid it on her arm.

"Nervous, Queen Val?" he said gently. "What are you doing out here in the dark? Suppose we go into the drawing-room?"

"Is Geoffrey in yet?" Dorrisant continued, as they passed through the window into the drawing-room together. It was lighted, as yet, only at one end; and the sharp circles of light made by the two shaded lamps seemed only to emphasize the shadows around. Valentine sank into an arm-chair close to one of the lamps, and let herself fall back, as if all at once sensible of great weariness.

"No," she said listlessly, "not yet."

Dorrisant was in the act of wheeling up a chair. He stopped, and looked at Valentine.

"It's getting late," he said, "very late. Surely he could have been in by this time."

There was something slightly unusual in his full, even voice; and Valentine's listlessness was penetrated by it. She raised herself in her chair and faced Dorrisant, who was still standing.

"Are you anxious, Pater?" she said lightly. "I think there is no need. He must have gone to dine with the Davidsons. I should scarcely expect him for another hour."

"Yes," answered Dorrisant slowly. "But the storm will be heavy when it comes."

He sat down as he spoke, and as he had placed his chair, Valentine could no longer see his full face.

She sat, her head thrown back against the cushions, dreamily watching his profile, with a soft light in her eyes.

"You are very fond of Geoff?" she said in a sympathetic tone.

There was a moment's pause; and then he spoke almost hastily, and very emphatically.

"Yes," he said, "I am. And it is an immense satisfaction to me, among the many satisfactions the past two months have brought me"—there was an inflection in his voice that made his words a graceful compliment—"that you have grown fond of him, too. Poor Geoff! It will be a bad day for him when I am obliged to issue marching orders."

"You are not thinking of that yet?"

Valentine's voice was low and pleading. He looked round at her intently for a moment, as the lamplight, which threw a shadow on his face, fell full on hers, and then changing his tone, he spoke seriously, and as one who wishes to produce an understanding.

"I shall be obliged to think of it before long," he said, "little as I like the thought. The state of the case, you see, is this. On the twelfth of next February, Geoffrey, as you know, comes of age, his fortune passes into his own hands, and he must make some sort of start in life. Now, if he is to make that start in London, as his father wished, it is obviously my duty as his guardian to show him something of London life and of English life altogether before the time comes when he must make his choice."

He paused, and Valentine said anxiously: "Yes?"

"So, even if it were otherwise possible," he continued, smiling at her kindly, "that he and I should remain at Templecombe for an indefinite period, Geoff's duty to his father and to the position before him, and my duty as Geoff's guardian—the everlasting yea and nay of this work-a-day world, Queen Val, must drive us away."

He paused again, but this time Valentine did not speak. She had turned her face away, and was gazing steadily out into the night. In the silence there was a low growl of distant thunder, but neither Valentine nor her stepfather seemed to notice it. At last she said in a very low voice:

"I shall miss you."

Four simple words, but the tone in which

she spoke them made them more pathetic than any speech.

"We shall miss you," answered Dorrisant gently.

There was another silence, and another growl of thunder, and then she said:

"What are your plans?"

"I propose," said Dorrisant, leaning forward and speaking clearly and readily like a man whose self-communings on the subject were over, "I propose to take the boy to visit the principal industrial and social centres throughout England, Scotland, and Wales, and to take him also to Ireland. I have any quantity of introductions all over the country, and I have come to the conclusion that this will be the most effectual way of putting him in touch with the spirit of the times in this country. Then, in October, say, I propose to settle with him in town, go into society, and show him everything there is to be shown."

"I see," said Valentine in the same low voice. "You are right, of course. Ah!"

The last exclamation was a sharp, terrified cry; she clasped her hands suddenly over her eyes, as a splendid shaft of forked lightning sprang out of the clouds, and apparently buried itself in the earth just outside the window. Her voice was drowned in a terrific peal of thunder, and as its echoes died away Mark Dorrisant, who had sprang to shut the window, turned to her, his face white and agitated.

"That boy!" he cried. "That boy!"

His voice had hardly died away when there was another rattling peal of thunder, and mingling with it the clamour of the heavy door-bell violently pulled.

"There he is!" cried Valentine. "Ah, how wet he must be! Look at the rain!"

She hastened across the room, and threw open the door just as the front door, hidden from her sight by an angle in the wall, was opened by the footman. But the panting, dripping, laughing figure she expected to see burst into the hall did not appear.

Instead, there was a muffled sound as of the tread of several men, the murmur of voices; and shaken by the thunder, dismayed suddenly without knowing why, Valentine shrank back upon Mark Dorrisant as he came towards her.

"It isn't Geoff," she whispered fearfully.

"Oh, Pater, what is it?"

At that moment, round the angle of the wall, there came rapidly and decidedly a

man, and as she saw his face a low cry of apprehension broke from Valentine, and her stepfather put a reassuring arm about her, his own face white to the lips. It was the village doctor, and as he saw the two in the doorway he stopped short. Recovering instantly, however, he came quickly towards them.

"Miss Clinton," he said, "I am sorry to say there has been an accident. Young Mr. Cary——" He hesitated, and glanced at Mark Dorrisant. "Mr. Dorrisant," he continued, "it's a poor business trying to make bad news good! I'm afraid the poor young fellow is badly hurt."

"Lightning!" Only the one word came from Mark Dorrisant's ashen lips, but he tightened his hold on Valentine as though his instinct was to support her.

"No," returned the other briefly. "He is shot——"

He was interrupted. With a low shriek of unutterable horror Valentine released herself from Mark Dorrisant's arm, and confronted the doctor, her hands outstretched as though to keep off something too terrible to be borne, her face quivering.

"No!" she cried. "No, no! Not that! Not that! It isn't possible! He couldn't! He couldn't!"

There was an instant's pause of blank astonishment on the doctor's part, and then he said soothingly:

"My dear Miss Clinton, pray calm yourself. Mr. Cary's gun was lying by him; it must, of course, have gone off accidentally!"

"Mr. Cary's gun?" exclaimed Mark Dorrisant hoarsely. "He had no gun with him! What do you mean?"

Round the corner at that moment, as if in terrible answer to his question, there came a dreadful little procession, four men carrying between them something still and straight. Behind them came a fifth man carrying a gun, and towards him, hardly seeming to notice the sad burden that came first, Valentine rushed.

"The gun!" she cried. "The gun! Whose is it? Whose is it?"

"It must have been lent to the poor young gentleman, miss," answered the man, looking at her with wondering eyes. "It's Mr. Gaunt's gun, miss, as far as that goes. It's got his name on it."

There was a low, moaning cry, a slender figure swaying helplessly to and fro; and then, as her stepfather and the doctor started simultaneously towards her, Valentine sank insensible at their feet.

CHAPTER IX. ON SUSPICION.

"THEN just you tell Mr. Dorrisant that I am most anxious to see him for a few minutes — most anxious. Dear! dear! Shocking affair, to be sure!"

There was a strange hush about the house, and the speaker had lowered his voice instinctively. The footman responded in an equally low tone and led the way to the drawing-room. The drawing-room was empty; there was about it that intangible something that says so plainly that the even tenor of ordinary life is arrested. Left alone, the visitor walked across to the window murmuring again: "Dear! dear! dear!" He had waited only a few minutes when the door opened, and Mark Dorrisant entered the room.

"My dear Mr. Dorrisant," he began, hurrying across the room, and speaking in a tone in which excitement and sympathy were curiously blended, "my dear sir, what a very terrible occurrence! I only heard of it an hour ago, and you will understand that as the nearest justice of the peace it devolves upon me to see that not a moment is lost in investigating the affair. How is the poor young fellow now?"

The speaker was Mr. Kenyon, the old gentleman who had been the last to leave of the guests of two nights before. His cheery face was crimson with excitement. If there was one form of participation in his neighbour's affairs in which Mr. Kenyon revelled more than another it was in the exercise of his magisterial functions, and such a case as the present did not come within his cognisance every day.

Mark Dorrisant was a striking contrast to his visitor. His eyes were sunken and haggard, looking as though the night through which he had passed had told on him physically; his voice as he answered was low, and his whole manner, naturally enough, was the manner of a man who is undergoing heavy mental strain.

"He is lying between life and death," he said. "We have had two London men down this morning in consultation with Lee and Andrews, who were with him all night, and they give us a little hope."

"Dear! dear!" ejaculated Mr. Kenyon for the third time. "Horrible thing! Horrible! And Miss Clinton? Terribly overcome she was, I hear! How is she this morning?"

"Considerably exhausted, as you will believe," returned Mark Dorrisant. "Yes, the shock overcame her entirely."

He spoke briefly, as if anxious to dismiss that branch of the subject, and Mr. Kenyon seated himself deliberately.

"Now, my dear sir," he said fustily, "you must feel with me that there is not a moment to be lost in bringing the would-be murderer to light."

"It is barely possible," Mark Dorrisant said slowly, "it is barely possible that it may have been an accident. Mind, I say this against my own conviction, because I will not deprive any one of the benefit of the doubt. My own convictions on the subject are immaterial—at present."

"Hardly," returned Mr. Kenyon. "But as to an accident, you mean it is just possible that the gun may have been lent to Mr. Cary by its owner, and have gone off accidentally?"

"It is barely possible," said Mark Dorrisant, with a grave smile, that destroyed the hypothesis even while his words admitted it.

"But most improbable, my dear sir," responded Mr. Kenyon, mistaking the influence of that smile for his own perspicacity. "Had this been the case we should have heard from Mr. Gaunt before this. Now, serious as it is to bring names into the discussion, it is of no use to beat about the bush. The facts as I have them are these. This poor young ward of yours was found last night at about ten o'clock by one of the gamekeepers in a lonely part of the park, shot in the left side. The man procured assistance and brought him here at once, and brought here also the gun found by his side. This gun is identified as belonging to Mr. Kenneth Gaunt, Miss Clinton's agent. Mr. Gaunt's gun has done the mischief—of that there is no doubt; and from Mr. Gaunt's gun one proceeds naturally to Mr. Gaunt. Now, the two young men had quarrelled, Mr. Dorrisant. I myself heard Mr. Cary appeal to you against Mr. Gaunt."

"True," returned Mark Dorrisant, with grave reserve. "Their quarrel was so violent that Miss Clinton was forced to interfere. Mr. Gaunt was requested by her to leave the house."

"Quite so, quite so!" said Mr. Kenyon eagerly. He had no ill-will towards Kenneth Gaunt—he was as kind-hearted an old gentleman as ever breathed; but his keenest sensation at the moment was one of lively enjoyment. "Now, Mr.

Gaunt is not the kind of young man to let a quarrel rest, I should say."

Mark Dorrisant rose and began to pace up and down the room.

"My stepdaughter should know his character," he said, in a low, agitated voice. "And her reception of the news——"

He broke off suddenly, as though he had said more than he intended.

"Her reception of the news!" Mr. Kenyon repeated. "Was there anything peculiar about Miss Clinton's manner? We can't go too carefully into these things."

Mark Dorrisant stopped in his walk.

"Mr. Kenyon," he said, "I am sorry the words escaped me. I have been trying to put away from me the impression that comes back upon me whenever I have time to think. My poor boy is lying upstairs half murdered, and when I think of this I can hardly control myself." He paused before he continued hoarsely: "Consequently I daren't trust my own judgement. I am afraid of making evidence."

"Tut, tut!" ejaculated Mr. Kenyon, convinced that there was something most important connected with Miss Clinton and her demeanour. "Well, suppose you tell me the facts, and leave it to me to discriminate. Miss Clinton was shocked, of course?"

"She was shocked, but she was not surprised."

"Good Lord!" exclaimed the electrified justice of the peace. "Do you mean she knew of it beforehand?"

"I mean that she had reason to believe that Mr. Gaunt's grudge against my poor boy was a deadly one. The impression I cannot get rid of is that Mr. Gaunt had threatened my boy in her hearing."

"But this is most important, sir," exclaimed Mr. Kenyon in intense excitement. "Threatened! Can I see Miss Clinton?"

"I hardly know," returned Mark Dorrisant slowly; he seemed to be deliberating with himself. "My stepdaughter is very much shaken."

"Naturally," assented Mr. Kenyon, "if she has such important evidence on her mind! She will be relieved, I'm sure, to be questioned."

"I doubt——" began Mark Dorrisant dubiously.

But his hesitation only rendered Mr. Kenyon more bent upon the interview he proposed.

"My dear sir," he said with much dignity, "in a merely private capacity I should not, of course, think of trespassing

on Miss Clinton's seclusion; but, in the cause of justice, I must beg you to ask her to spare me a few moments."

Mark Dorrisant paused for another moment, and then he left the room.

Ten minutes passed, and Mr. Kenyon began to grow restless; ten minutes more, and his curiosity waxed to a preternatural extent. Ten minutes yet, and he had almost forgotten that he was not actually seated on the bench, when Mark Dorrisant came in again alone.

"My stepdaughter will be with us in a moment," he said hurriedly. "Mr. Kenyon, I should be extremely obliged if you will ask her no questions. The subject seems to give her great pain. Mr. Gaunt—the idea of implicating Mr. Gaunt seems peculiarly distasteful to her. I had no idea——"

He broke off suddenly, and stood aside as Valentine entered the room, and Mr. Kenyon rose with his most magisterial air to receive her.

Valentine was very pale; her eyes, like her stepfather's, were sunken, and there were heavy shadows beneath them. But there was nothing about her in the least suggestive of that agitation which Mark Dorrisant had tacitly imputed to her. On the contrary, the most noticeable feature about her was a composure that seemed excessive under the circumstances. Nor was there that reluctance in her manner which would have been consistent with the length of time it had apparently taken to persuade her to appear. She came in, on the contrary, quietly, shook hands with Mr. Kenyon in silence, and replied to his enquiries as to her health very simply. Only her eyes were unnaturally bright—bright as physical pain might have made them.

"Now, my dear Miss Clinton," he said, with pompous pleasantness; "now, I've one or two questions to ask you, and I'm sure you won't allow any—any very natural dislike to—to what may seem like pointing suspicion at any one to prevent your answering to the best of your ability. Justice must be done, you know, my dear young lady, however painful it may be."

He glanced at Mark Dorrisant, and Valentine answered:

"Of course, Mr. Kenyon. Justice is everything."

She was whiter than she had been, and there was an unusual ring in her voice.

"Quite so," was the approving answer.

"Well, now, Miss Clinton, do you happen

to have seen Mr. Gaunt, your agent, since he dined here two nights since, may I ask?"

Valentine started. She had evidently not been prepared for such a question.

"Yes," she said, and her voice was low and rather uncertain.

"Ah! yes," said her interlocutor, becoming increasingly oblivious of the unofficial nature of the proceeding. "Now, what passed between you? Was any reference made to his quarrel with young Mr. Cary on the previous evening?"

Valentine lifted her head suddenly. Her lips were not steady, in spite of her evident efforts to control them. She did not speak, but glanced across to her stepfather as if with an involuntary appeal for support. With the same restrained intentness with which he had hitherto listened, Mark Dorrisant responded mutely to the mute appeal. He came and stood behind her chair. There was another moment's pause, and then Valentine said quickly:

"I dismissed Mr. Gaunt. I am not satisfied with his work."

Mark Dorrisant, standing behind her, looked across at Mr. Kenyon with a pitying expression that begged him to accept the statement. Meeting the look, Mr. Kenyon became aware that it required investigating.

"I am sorry to have to press the question; I am afraid it is painful to you, my dear young lady," he said. "But I must ask whether the quarrel between these two young men had anything to do with your dismissal of Mr. Gaunt?"

There was another pause, and Valentine's eyes grew brighter yet, and a burning spot of colour appeared on the dead white of her cheeks.

"Not directly," she said at last.

"But indirectly?" said Mr. Kenyon promptly. "Ah! And Mr. Gaunt knew this?"

"Yes."

"And he was naturally—well, let us say annoyed?"

"Yes."

"He was very much annoyed! Now, did he, in the excitement of the moment, use anything like a threat in connection with Mr. Cary?"

With an inarticulate cry Valentine sprang to her feet, stretching out one hand to her stepfather as she looked down on her interlocutor with flashing eyes.

"Pater," she cried, "I won't be cross-questioned like this; it's unendurable!"

With a glance at the astonished Mr. Kenyon, Mr. Dorrisant drew her hands into his own and held them firmly.

"My dear Valentine," he said, "calm yourself. You are giving an impression which is far worse than the truth, I am sure. Tell Mr. Kenyon Mr. Gaunt's exact words."

His manner, tender and commanding—a manner that he had never used to her before—had an instantaneous effect on her. The fire died out of her eyes, the hot colour from her face.

"He said," she began, in a low, choked voice, addressing herself to Dorrisant rather than to Mr. Kenyon, "he said——"

At that moment there was a sound of quick footsteps in the hall outside, the door was flung open, and into the room, unannounced, breathless, and very white, burst Kenneth Gaunt. He stopped short for an instant as the trio already assembled turned simultaneously towards him. Then he came rapidly on, saying impetuously:

"I beg your pardon, Miss Clinton; they didn't tell me you were here. But it's just as well. I've come up about—about what they say in the village. I've only just heard it. Perhaps you don't know that they say it's my doing—this accident, I mean."

He had poured out the words incoherently, evidently carried completely out of himself by his indignant horror, looking from one to the other of the three faces turned towards him, but with something in his voice that addressed itself solely to Valentine.

It was Mark Dorrisant who answered him very coldly.

"Yes," he said, "we know."

"But you know, of course, that it's all nonsense!" cried Kenneth eagerly. "I've behaved like a bear, Mr. Dorrisant; still, you don't think so badly of me as to believe this of me, I know!"

There was no answer. With his face set like an iron mask, Mark Dorrisant looked deliberately away from the young man. There was a deep breath from Kenneth, and something seemed to pass across his excited face, whitening it and stilling it perceptibly; then Mr. Kenyon, recovering some of his sense of official importance from the confusion into which the last two or three minutes had thrown him, said:

"It is hardly a question for belief or disbelief, Mr. Gaunt. Unfortunately sundry

very suspicious circumstances connect you with the crime—if crime there has been. Your gun——"

"I know!" interrupted Kenneth eagerly. "I had been out all the afternoon with my gun, and coming home through the park I found my dog caught in a trap. The poor beast was badly hurt, and I propped the gun against a tree while I attended to him, and completely forgot it when I carried him home. I only remembered it about two hours after."

Into one of the three faces which he confronted there leapt, as he made his impetuous explanation, the intense relief of anticipation satisfied, and Valentine turned swiftly to Mr. Kenyon. But he stopped her with a movement of his hand.

"And at what time did you reach home, Mr. Gaunt?" he said. His face and voice were alike portentously solemn, and a shock—a curiously similar shock—passed over the faces of Valentine and Kenneth.

"I've no idea," answered Kenneth quickly. "It must have been about half-past nine. My servant had gone to bed, and I was too busy with the dog to think of the time."

There was a slight movement from Mark Dorrisant, but he did not speak. There was a moment's pause, and then Mr. Kenyon said loftily:

"Very unfortunate, Mr. Gaunt."

The light died out of Valentine's face, and Kenneth Gaunt's face grew rather pale and stern.

"Am I to understand," he said, addressing himself directly to Mr. Kenyon with a proud, peremptory ring in his voice, "that I am being seriously accused of this thing?"

"You are to understand, Mr. Gaunt," said Mr. Kenyon pompously, "that your unsupported word—happy as I should be in a private capacity to accept it—does not refute the circumstantial evidence afforded by the acknowledged agency of your gun in this matter. You are known to have quarrelled with Mr. Cary; evidence will be forthcoming to show that you have uttered threats against him——"

"Threats!" interposed Kenneth hotly. "Threats!"

He stopped abruptly and looked, almost for the first time, directly at Valentine. She did not look at him, as she said in a low, almost unnaturally steady voice:

"If by 'evidence' Mr. Kenyon means anything I may have said, it is only just that every one should understand that I

myself entirely disbelieve that Mr. Gaunt has had any hand whatever in the matter."

"Thank you," said Kenneth in a low tone.

There was a moment's pause, and the atmosphere seemed to be overcharged with some kind of tense emotion. Then Mark Dorrisant broke the spell. Laying his hand gently on his stepdaughter's shoulder, he turned to Mr. Kenyon, and said in a low voice, as though urging him to end a painful scene:

"What do you propose to do?"

"I propose to issue a warrant against Mr. Gaunt on suspicion," was the prompt reply. "He will see, I am sure, that no other course is open to me." Then, as Kenneth, white to the lips, his face very set and proud, bent his head in acquiescence, the old gentleman turned to Valentine. "My dear young lady," he said kindly, "we won't detain you any longer. Give me permission to give your man an order, and then let Mr. Dorrisant take you upstairs."

Valentine did not wait for her stepfather's escort. Before either Mark Dorrisant or Mr. Kenyon had realised her movement, she had crossed the room to the door. It was opened for her by Kenneth, and she passed out, white as death, without another word.

Half an hour later Kenneth Gaunt was in the hands of the local police, arrested on suspicion.

CHAPTER X. THE CHARGE DISMISSED.

SIX weeks went by, and Geoffrey Cary lay between life and death, and the charge against Kenneth Gaunt remained in abeyance. The case was brought before the magistrates on the day following his arrest, and was by them remanded "pending the production of further evidence." It was obvious that while young Cary lived nothing could be done until he might recover consciousness. Ball was offered for Kenneth and was finally accepted; and he was free to go about his business as he best might, a man under a heavy cloud, shunned and suspected on every hand.

For the public mind of Templecombe fastened on him as the criminal from the very first, and allowed no possibility of doubt.

There was, indeed, a minority who had several cogent objections to offer. In the first place, these dissenters asserted that the evidence forthcoming against Kenneth Gaunt was purely circumstantial, and as

such to be treated with diffidence. Secondly, that Kenneth Gaunt had proved himself during his life at Templecombe to be a man of truth and honour, and that his word, therefore, deserved credence. This opinion gained strength from the fact that his word was fully borne out in one particular, inasmuch as his dog was limping about the village, lamed by the teeth of a trap. They further maintained that no man in his senses, having attempted murder, would leave his gun on the spot as evidence against himself. To this minority one comprehensive question was propounded: if Mr. Gaunt were not the criminal, who was?—a question the answer to which was apparently very far to seek. And as the days went on and public interest in the matter was continually freshened by the weekly remanding of the case before the magistrate, and the atmosphere of suspense thus created, every discussion of the subject ended more and more surely with a reference to that hoped-for recovery of consciousness by Geoffrey Cary which was becoming the very goal of public anticipation.

The weary days dragged themselves slowly away as Mark Dorrisant and Valentine stood helplessly by, while Geoffrey's fever ran its course, and neither Kenneth Gaunt nor the day when those alternations of delirium and stupor should pass into consciousness was ever mentioned between them.

That the stern patience and reserve with which Mark Dorrisant waited were the result of rigid self-control, no one who spoke to him in those days could doubt. That he believed in Kenneth Gaunt's guilt was equally certain, though no word to that effect ever crossed his lips. His very silence and self-repression on the subject gave to his conviction a weight which no words could have produced. And on Valentine each day as it passed seemed to leave an absolutely perceptible trace; they seemed to be literally wearing her away, she grew so white and so slight. In manner she was always composed and quiet, but there was that about her that suggested the presence of a continual strain—not merely the strain of the hourly anxiety about Geoffrey—but of something beyond, of which she did not speak. To her stepfather's tenderness she responded with an affection which seemed to grow with every hour of their common anxiety. They lived, as it were, a mutual life, in which the forthcoming report from the sick-room was the goal of their thoughts. If each lived another and

a separate life in which the goal lay further off, neither ever spoke of it.

And at last that far-off goal was reached. Geoffrey Cary struggled back from the gates of death, and recovered consciousness.

Perhaps a blanker feeling of disappointment was never experienced than that which obtained at Templecombe when it was whispered about that young Mr. Cary was entirely unable to throw any light on the affair of which he was the hero. His evidence began and ended in the statement that he had been walking quickly through the park at about nine o'clock in the evening, when he had heard a shot, had felt a stinging, numbing sensation in his side, and had lost consciousness. He had seen absolutely nothing.

It was three days since Geoffrey had made this disappointing declaration, a hot morning in the first week of August. It was about eleven o'clock and Mark Dorrisant was alone with his ward; he was standing by his bed, and the two had evidently been talking.

The face at which he was looking down was like the ghost of the Geoffrey of seven weeks before. There was not a trace of colour in it, all the boyish outlines were sharpened and emaciated, and the curly, luxuriant hair was cropped close. Only his eyes were the same, honest and smiling. They were rather too bright now—the conversation seemed to have excited him a little—as he looked up at Mark Dorrisant, and said, in a weak voice:

"All right, then, Pater; what you do is sure to be right. And somehow I shouldn't have thought that that fellow was the sort to do a thing like this." He paused a moment and then added reflectively: "It was rather a blackguardly thing, wasn't it? I wonder awfully who it really was!"

Mark Dorrisant did not answer instantly. He put out one of his hands and laid it on the boy's head.

"I wonder!" he said.

There was a shadowy little smile about his lips as he spoke, and Geoffrey, looking up at him, exclaimed:

"You're awfully sure it was Gaunt, Pater."

This time Mark Dorrisant did not answer him at all. His face set itself sternly.

"You're tired, my boy," he said; "rest now and think no more about it." He paused, and touched the boy's forehead again affectionately as he added: "I must go."

On this August morning, after nearly

two months of postponement and delay, the charge against Kenneth Gaunt was to come before the magistrates for what was tacitly understood to be a final hearing, and the excitement throughout the neighbourhood was at fever pitch. As Mark Dorrisant came downstairs now from Geoffrey's room, the carriage was already waiting for him and for Valentine, summoned once more to give evidence as to the threatening words used to her by Kenneth Gaunt against Geoffrey Cary.

"Go to your mistress," said Dorrisant to a servant, "and ask her, if she is ready, if she will come down to me in the drawing-room."

A few moments later Valentine came down the stairs with her hat on, and went into the drawing-room. She was very pale and quiet, and there was an added touch of haughtiness about her, as though she were nerved to meet some sort of ordeal. She smiled at Dorrisant, and as he held out his hand she put hers into it, and waited for him to speak.

"Valentine," he said gravely, "I want to tell you something before we start. I think you will be glad to hear it. I saw Mr. Kenyon yesterday, as you know, and we came to a decision which I have just been talking over with Geoffrey. The charge against Mr. Gaunt will be dismissed to-day on the plea of insufficient evidence."

Valentine started slightly, and drew her hand away, as if involuntarily.

"Dismissed!" she said quickly, in a low voice. "Dismissed! Then will he be cleared?"

She was looking down at the handle of the sunshade she held, and therefore she did not see Mark Dorrisant's look at her. But she noticed that there was a pause, and before he spoke he laid one hand on hers, as a sort of prelude.

"All I need say," he began gently, "is, that though the evidence against Mr. Gaunt is heavy, it would be almost impossible to prove the case in a court of law, and under the circumstances—as, thank Heaven, it is not a case of murder—I have told Mr. Kenyon that we should greatly prefer not to prosecute."

"Then the only way to clear him would be to find the real criminal?"

"To find the real criminal, yes!" assented Mark Dorrisant drily.

Valentine's colour rose.

"Pater!" she said impulsively, "you mean most kindly, I know, but justice is

better than kindness. Don't let this charge be withdrawn. They say that my evidence weighs heavily against Mr. Gaunt, and I know that that evidence means absolutely nothing! If the case is properly tried the truth must come out, and Mr. Gaunt will be cleared. Don't let injustice be done!"

She was facing him bravely, with unshrinking eyes looking straight into his face. It was for justice, she was saying to herself. Mark Dorrisant looked at her keenly for a moment, and then a shade of pain settled down upon his face.

"Queen Val," he said gently, "I am sorry that there should be one subject on which we think differently. It is time to start."

By the evening it was known all over Templecombe that the charge against Kenneth Gaunt had been dismissed by the magistrate. The stain against his name was in no wise eradicated; the mystery was in no wise cleared up. As far as Templecombe and the countryside went, Kenneth Gaunt was a disgraced man.

CHAPTER XI. THE INJUSTICE.

"YOU'RE coming to live in London, too, Val? Oh, how jolly! Don't make it miles away from Pater and me, will you?"

"You are a silly boy, Geoff!"

"I don't see that! Tell me why, or I'll throw off all these rugs you've put on me."

"And prove it conclusively." Valentine laughed. She was sitting on the end of a sofa in her morning-room, on which sofa Geoffrey Cary was lying. The room was very bright and sunny; about all the inanimate things there was a sort of a reflex festival air, which curiously enough seemed to emanate, in the first place, from the thin, white-faced figure on the sofa. This was the first day on which Geoffrey Cary had been able to leave his room.

Mrs. Carryl was established in a large wicker chair near the window, on Geoffrey's right-hand side. She seemed always to gravitate towards large chairs, as if impelled by a sense of the shelter they might possibly afford to her, mentally and physically, by screening her from the world. In her hands was a new strip of the lace she was always working; she looked like a little automaton which had never altered its action since the long-ago day when Valentine had first spoken to her of Mr. Dorrisant. New people, a new atmosphere, startling and terrible incidents, all seemed to come and go around that placid, weak little soul, without approaching it.

On Valentine's lap lay a book, from which she had been reading aloud until the clock struck twelve, when she had laid it down, and declared that Geoffrey was to be left alone, and to proceed instantly to take an hour's sleep before luncheon. But before she could rise to put the first part of this mandate into effect, Geoffrey had assailed her with half-a-dozen questions, to which he required instant answers.

Of these she had supplied several; and she rose now quickly, and stood over him in a menacing attitude, though a smile trembled round her lips.

"You're very silly," she said, "from every point of view." She bent down and tucked the rugs round him with a gentle force. "What I meant was this: of course I don't mean to be separated from you or Pater, you goose! And now I'm going; and if you don't do as I wish and go to sleep this moment, you can't be taken to Ventnor on Thursday."

Geoffrey turned an imploring face to the wicker chair, with the evident intention of appealing to its occupant. But Valentine was too quick for him.

"No," she said promptly, "Marion is neither going to sympathise with you nor to stay with you. Come, Marion," she added, and as Mrs. Carryl, slowly awakened to the fact that Valentine was going, emerged from her chair, Valentine, with a smiling nod to Geoffrey, remorselessly left him to himself.

Only a week had passed since the day when the charge against Kenneth Gaunt had been finally dismissed. But very marked effects had been produced in that time. Geoffrey himself had made large strides towards recovery, and the rapidity with which his convalescence drew on engendered a corresponding rapidity in the maturing of plans for the future.

In ten days more the whole party—Valentine, Mrs. Carryl, Mark Dorrisant, and Geoffrey—were to go to Ventnor, for the change of air ordered for the latter; and Templecombe was to be shut up for an indefinite period. Valentine had announced a determination which took no one by surprise. She intended, she said, to take a house in London, and spend the winter there.

Before she finally settled this, another arrangement was entered into, not without some demur on Mark Dorrisant's part. It was, in her eyes, the most important part of Valentine's plan, that he and Geoffrey Cary should live with her during the

process of establishing the latter in London. Mark Dorrisant had fully intended, he said, to take for himself and the boy a set of chambers; and he would not hear of any other course unless Valentine agreed that the establishment she wished to set up should be a joint household in deed as well as in name. But when Valentine had been brought to consent to this stipulation, he yielded with a grace only enhanced by his previous hesitation.

The change in Geoffrey, the stir and exhilaration consequent on the anticipation of other changes to come, cleared away all heaviness of oppression in the atmosphere of the house, and brought about a reaction of cheerfulness. In the village, too, the excitement was passing away. The only definite result of the whole affair was the fact that Kenneth Gaunt had his life to begin anew with a millstone round his neck, and this fact was entirely undisturbing to the public mind.

Only to Valentine the reaction seemed to come rather forcedly, and to ring a little falsely when it came. She was outwardly sweet and bright as ever; tender and affectionate with both Geoffrey and her stepfather. But her eyes were too bright; her cheeks were too pink; her voice always too excited.

She turned to Mrs. Carryl now as she shut the door of Geoffrey's room, and the laugh died from her face.

"Come into my room, Marion," she said in a low, imperious tone, so strikingly dissimilar to the gaiety with which she had spoken in the same breath as to be almost startling. "I want to speak to you." She led the way, and as Mrs. Carryl followed her into her room, she signed to her to shut the door. "Marion," she began, confronting the little woman, with something suggestive of defiance in her spirited pose, "I want you to drive to the Grange with Mr. Dorrisant this afternoon. Mr. Gaunt is coming to see me on business, and I—of course there must be no chance of their meeting."

"Mr. Gaunt," ejaculated Mrs. Carryl blankly. "Oh, Valentine——"

Valentine struck her foot impatiently on the ground.

"Marion," she said, "I have told you already that I consider Mr. Gaunt has been unjustly treated. I do not for one moment believe that he did what he was accused of doing, you know that very well."

Mrs. Carryl assented with deprecating haste, and added feebly:

"Everybody believes he did it. Mr. Dorrisant——"

"I know," interrupted Valentine quickly, and a heavy shadow passed across her face. "We need not talk about it, Marion. I would not hurt my stepfather for the world. Don't I know what Geoffrey is to him, and how he must feel——" She broke off, and her face quivered; but apparently she was afraid of herself and her emotions, for she took refuge in an access of imperiousness, which was somewhat at variance with the nervous movements of her fingers. "So you see, Marion," she said, "though I think it only just to see Mr. Gaunt, and wind up the business of the estate with him in person, I do not wish the fact to be forced upon Mr. Dorrisant."

"No, of course not," said Mrs. Carryl meekly. "It's rather awkward for you, isn't it, Valentine?"

Valentine did not answer. She turned away, and walking slowly to the window, stood there looking out in silence. Mrs. Carryl waited timidly. Then finding that Valentine did not speak, she as timidly withdrew. At last Valentine turned sharply.

"One must be just," she said under her breath in a strange, defiant tone. "It is the injustice that is so horrible—that I cannot bear."

Her eyes were shining and gleaming, and her lips trembled a little.

They were trembling again, and her eyes looked out dark and dilated from a pale face, when, on a summons from the footman that afternoon, she went downstairs to the library. She laid her hand on the lock and paused for a moment as if involuntarily. Her breath was coming quickly. Then, setting her lips, she opened the door.

"I am very glad to see you, Mr. Gaunt," she said, holding out her hand with grave dignity. But as the figure waiting for her advanced to meet her, and the light fell full upon his face, her lips closed again with a contraction of the muscles which Kenneth saw and misinterpreted. He did not know how nearly a horrified exclamation had broken from those proudly curved lips.

Kenneth Gaunt, looked ten years older than he had looked when they had last stood face to face in that room. It was not only that he was thin and worn; it was not only that there were lines about his mouth and eyes. All the fire, all the

eager youth and enthusiasm seemed to have been, for the time at least, overwhelmed and stamped out. His eyes had lost their spirit; there was a strange expression in them in which bewilderment and wistfulness were oddly blended, and which hardly harmonised with the resolute endurance into which the rest of his features were composed. To Kenneth the events of the past few weeks had meant much more, even, than they must inevitably have meant for any man. They had meant a rough awakening—a realisation of sundry facts about himself and his relations with his neighbours.

With a hot temper and a high spirit on which no softening influence of home had ever been brought to bear, Kenneth Gaunt had gone through life so far in a rough-and-ready, high-handed fashion. The world had been a combination of playground and battle-field for him ever since he had first been tumbled into it—a jolly little motherless fellow of seven, turned adrift in a public school. Like many another fiery, impetuous person, his faults were all on the surface; all the harm that was in him came out. But he never realised that few people stop to consider what lies below the surface, and that no amount of integrity or warm-heartedness can wholly counteract the effect of a hot temper and a tongue regardless of consequences. He had been vaguely conscious of his impetuosity and self-assertiveness; but he had looked upon them as faults easily condoned, and at the bottom of his heart there lurked an unconscious estimate of himself as a "good sort of fellow." To find himself seriously accused of a dastardly crime; to find that nine-tenths of the people among whom he had lived for four years found nothing preposterous and incredible in such a charge in connection with him, had been a shock to him under which the foundations of his world seemed to give way. And the effect upon him of the blow was a testimony to the real good that lay beneath the surface. Instead of raging at circumstances and people, he "looked at home," as the saying goes, sobered and tamed. During those long weeks of suspense as he went about in bitter loneliness, he had come slowly and painfully to a clearer and a humbler perception on many points. If, at the end, the true criminal had been discovered and his innocence established beyond a doubt, the impression made by those weeks would still have remained. As it was, social shipwreck

seemed only the natural result of the temporary shipwreck of all his old ideas.

He shook hands with Valentine now very quietly; waited while she moved on to the big chair at the writing-table, and then sat down opposite her. They had sat so, often and often, discussing business details; they had thwarted and opposed one another, so, over and over again.

There was a moment's silence, and then Kenneth unfolded the papers he had brought with him in a grave, businesslike manner. For nearly half an hour there was no sound in the library but the sound of their rustle, the rise and fall of his voice, and her brief responses. For nearly half an hour they sat one on either side of the table, and her eyes rested on her clasped hands, or met his for an instant as he looked up at her to be sure that he was making himself clear. Valentine grew whiter and whiter, and when the last paper was put aside and he lifted his head for the last time, she leant back in her chair, and a short breath parted her lips.

Kenneth glanced at her quickly. His face was flushed, and his hand was clenched as though it might have trembled had he allowed the muscles to relax.

"There is only one thing more," he said, "the contracts, estimates, and so forth, for the cottages. Here they are." He put his hand into his pocket as he spoke, and drew out an envelope, which he handed to her. "You will see I have written in all the necessary explanations. I"—he paused, and added in a lower voice: "I did not expect to have a personal interview with you until I got your note."

"There was no reason against it," said Valentine, her eyes fixed steadily on the blotting-pad before her. "I do not believe—what has been said."

"I can't thank you."

The words were low and broken, and they were succeeded by a moment's pause.

Valentine's hands were clasped tightly together. At last she said:

"You are going away to-morrow?"

"Yes," he answered heavily.

"Will you tell me what you are going to do?"

He lifted his head wearily and looked away.

"I don't know," he said. "It doesn't matter much."

"Oh, don't say that." The words came from Valentine against her will, apparently, and as he turned to her as if surprised,

with a light in his eyes, she went on quickly: "Injustice is such a horrible thing; it is a thing I cannot bear. And it is so dreadful to think of a man's life being spoilt because of it. Some day the truth will come out. It must. I'm sure it must."

He smiled faintly, and the light died out of his eyes.

"It is not the injustice," he said simply. "Not altogether, at least." There was another silence, broken this time by Kenneth. He rose. "I need not keep you any longer," he said. "Only—there is one thing. I want to apologise for all the times I've behaved like a cad. If," he hesitated, and then continued hurriedly, "if I could apologise to Mr. Dorrisant and Mr. Cary I would do so. As that is not possible, I apologise to you for my conduct to them. Why you should believe in me after all that has come and gone, I don't know. It only shows—what you are."

She had risen quickly as he spoke, and now she put out her hand impulsively as if to stop him. He accepted the gesture as his dismissal.

"Good-bye," he said simply. "I am very grateful to you for seeing me."

"Good-bye," she answered coldly.

He dropped her hand and turned away to the door; opened it, his face set and white, and closed it behind him. And then, as Valentine had done only a little earlier, he paused on the threshold. He let his forehead fall on his clenched hands, and a great sob shook him from head to foot.

"It's all over," he muttered to himself. "It's all over, and I shall never see her again."

And on the other side of the heavy door Valentine, her arms resting on the table and her face buried in them, was saying to herself over and over again:

"It is the injustice! It is the injustice!"

CHAPTER XII. "MY OLD FRIEND."

It was a frosty December morning, and Rotten Row presented a very cheery spectacle. The sun was shining; the air was crisp and fresh; and a sense of exhilaration seemed to be all-pervading among riders and horses alike.

And not one of the riders was enjoying himself or herself more thoroughly and openly than Geoffrey Cary as he galloped along at Valentine's side, laughing and talking in headlong, inconsequent boyish

fashion, catching up her merry answers and retorting on them again, until at last she reined in her horse to a walk, and turned with a laughing appeal to Dorrisant.

"Will you kindly forbid Geoff, Pater?" she said. "I will not have him flirting with Miss Lorraine in my house or at my party. Geoff, you shall just go to bed before the party begins to-night!"

There was a flush on Valentine's cheeks, brought there by the air and the exercise; her eyes were sparkling. She never showed to better advantage than on horseback, and it was not wonderful that more than one passer-by turned to look at the trio.

Nearly four months had passed since Templecombe had been left empty, and for two of those four months Valentine had been established in a house in Bruton Street; and with her, as had been arranged, were established Mark Dorrisant and Geoffrey Cary.

During these two months "the step-family," as Geoffrey called it, had settled itself down in the pleasant London house, to a pleasant London life. Mark Dorrisant had told Valentine that it was part of his plan for Geoffrey that the boy should see something of London society. It was a bad time of year for the purpose, but the many people who had known Valentine's aunt were ready to welcome Valentine; and Valentine's relations or friends were instantly welcomed for her sake. But it was not long before both Mark Dorrisant and Geoffrey Cary were welcome for their own sakes; and the presence of the attractive trio made by the "step-family" became a feature of every gathering, "smart" or informal, that enlivened the foggy November days.

The atmosphere of the house in Bruton Street was one of constant gaiety and high spirits. Geoffrey enjoyed life with unflagging zest and energy; Mark Dorrisant, apparently well satisfied, was always ready to promote pleasant schemes. As to Valentine herself, she was the queen of the house, and she reigned with a characteristic variableness. She turned to her stepfather more and more, with that generous confidence which is only possible to such a character. She played with and tyrannised over Geoffrey, her own youth exhilarated by the companionship of the youth at which she laughed in him. The shadow of the nearly accomplished tragedy that had darkened their life at Templecombe faded away in this new atmosphere as completely as if it had never existed.

Perhaps an added excitement was given to these months by a sense that the life they brought was only preliminary. Geoffrey's majority was to come about in February, and there was a tacit understanding that it would bring with it some as yet indefinite change. Everything, all plans and arrangements, led up to the twelfth of February, and there stopped short. Geoffrey's majority might prove the threshold of a state of things pleasanter even than the present, by reason of greater permanence; but it was a threshold, and at present the door was closed. Geoffrey himself talked little about his future life; only a word let fall now and then in confidential moments with Valentine showed that a sense of responsibility was alive and growing beneath his boyish light-heartedness.

And yet, in spite of her gaiety and brightness, even now as she walked her horse between Mark Dorrisant and Geoffrey, there was something about Valentine's face that made it strangely different from the face of the girl who had reigned alone at Templecombe nine months before. It was difficult to say what the change was, or where it lay. It would have been hard to say that she looked older, and yet that was the definition to which the difference most readily accommodated itself. Searching from feature to feature, the change might have been discovered in the eyes. For all their light and sparkle there was something in their depths which never altered; something which makes the difference between a woman's eyes and a child's. Mrs. Carryl had a vague conviction that Valentine had grown strangely uncertain, not only in her ways, but in her temper; and that she was surely more wilful and imperious than she had been before.

"Why did you ask Miss Lorraine?" said Mark Dorrisant, with a smile. "Geoff's heart is not a mill-stone, Queen Val."

She echoed his laugh merrily, and then said:

"We'll have one more canter, and then I must go in. I want to see that the flowers are all right."

"You want to go and gloat over that swell frock of yours," retorted Geoffrey, with a laugh, as he touched his horse lightly with his whip.

The party in question was a large dance which Valentine was giving that same night, the prospect of which had greatly excited Geoffrey. And his excitement was shared, though in different fashion, by Valentine. She had given no entertainment hitherto

on so large a scale, and the exhilaration of her manner this morning was due to some extent to her anticipation of the evening.

The Miss Lorraine mentioned by Valentine was the latest idol of Geoffrey's susceptible heart; a woman, or, as she herself said, "a girl" of about thirty, who was very pretty, very gushing, very popular, and very conscious of the fact that she had been Miss Lorraine for more seasons than she liked. Valentine was just going to retaliate, by reopening fire on the subject, when she was interrupted by an exclamation from Geoffrey.

"By Jove!" he exclaimed; "there's that fellow again. Look, Pater!" he continued eagerly, turning in his saddle; "no, you can't see him now, though; he is walking this way, but he's behind the trees. A great tall fellow, with a great red moustache, staring at Val like one o'clock. I should like to knock him down."

"A poor device, Geoff!" exclaimed Valentine as Mark Dorrisant turned in the direction indicated, and shook his head. "It's very natural that you should want to turn the conversation, but you shouldn't do it so obviously!"

"I don't!" maintained Geoffrey stoutly. "The man was staring, Val, and I saw him staring before! As to Miss Lorraine, I shall dance every dance with her to-night except those we sit out—come now!"

He laughed, a boy's jolly laugh; and Valentine laughed back as she responded:

"You can't, sir! You will be a gentleman of the house, and you'll have to dance with everybody. It will be your duty."

"I say!" ejaculated Geoffrey saucily. "And we counted up fifty girls at least coming!"

They were in the road by this time, and a quarter of an hour brought them to their own door.

"I'm not coming in now, Queen Val," said Mark Dorrisant, as he dismounted her. "But I shall be in to lunch. I'm going to see about that bouquet among other things," he added with a smile.

She smiled back at him with a word or two of pretty thanks, and then went up the steps followed by Geoffrey. Dorrisant watched them into the house, and then, as the door closed upon them, he turned away and began to retrace his steps down the street. A curious change came over him as he did so, a change under which even his singularly fine eyes seemed to become less beautiful. His whole face seemed absolutely to harden physically, as

though every muscle was slightly contracted in the close thought in which he had become intent. He was so absorbed that he did not notice a man who was standing at the corner of the street watching his approach, and evidently waiting for him; a strongly-built man with a red moustache, who had got out of a hansom there as the riders dismounted. Mark Dorrisant came up to the corner and stood for a moment waiting to cross, still with that hard, pre-occupied face. He was just moving on, hardly conscious of the presence of the man who was absolutely by his side, when the latter laid a hand suddenly on his shoulder.

"Well met, Mark, old boy," he said.

With a start as violent as though a pistol had been fired at his very ear, Mark Dorrisant turned and confronted the speaker, and then grew suddenly still from head to foot, staring into the florid face before him, his own face colourless and rigid.

Lunch-time came and Valentine, Geoffrey, and Mrs. Carryl alone made their appearance in the dining-room; the two former to comment to one another with some surprise on Mark Dorrisant's non-appearance.

"He will be in directly, no doubt," said Valentine, as she sat down. But the minutes passed by, lunch was finished, and still the place at the foot of the table was unoccupied. It was nearly four o'clock, and Valentine was sitting alone in her morning-room writing notes when Dorrisant came in quickly.

"My dear Valentine," he exclaimed, "I have come to beg your pardon. You didn't wait lunch, of course?"

Valentine had turned to him with a smile, and as she answered him brightly he threw himself into a chair near her table. His manner was even more disengaged, his tone more careless and pleasant than usual.

"My excuse is a good one, at any rate," he said; "I met an old friend."

"Yes?" said Valentine interestedly.

"What a little world it is after all, Queen Val! I lost sight of this fellow about five years ago; I've tried to get news of him again and again, and then we met suddenly in the street."

His tone was full of pleasure and excitement—almost emotion; and Valentine responded with quick sympathy:

"He was a great friend of yours, then? How delightful! I am so glad, Pater!"

He let his eyes rest on her face for a moment.

"That's like you, Queen Val," he said gently. "Yes," he went on, half dreamily; "yes, he was a great friend of mine, dear old Scudamore. It was an immense pleasure to see him again."

"I'm so glad!" exclaimed Valentine again. "When is he coming to see you here? We must ask him to dinner. I shall so like to know one of your old friends."

Mark Dorrisant smiled.

"Perhaps you wouldn't care about him, Queen Val," he said. "He is the best fellow that ever lived, but I don't know that he can be called exactly polished. He's very anxious to be introduced to you, but—no; on the whole I think not."

He spoke as though the question were not of much importance, and Valentine, her interest quickened by opposition, exclaimed with laughing imperiousness:

"Oh, but I think yes, Pater! Don't you think I can appreciate anything but polish? Of course I shall like him."

"He saw you in the Park this morning," went on Dorrisant, "and as I said before, he is very anxious to be introduced." He looked at Valentine with a smile, and a little flush came into her cheeks as she drew up her head with a gesture that was indescribably charming. "I'm afraid he conducted himself in his usual rough-and-ready fashion," Dorrisant added with a light laugh. "I gather that he is the man whom Geoff wished to knock down for staring at you."

His tone and manner transformed the episode from the insult which Geoffrey had made of it into a rather touching tribute of irrepressible admiration, and Valentine's laugh was by no means ill-pleased.

"Geoff won't knock him down here, I dare say," she said. "Pater, I simply insist on his being introduced to me."

"Perhaps you would like to send him an invitation for to-night?" suggested Dorrisant, laughing.

"Of course I should!" exclaimed Valentine. "What a capital thought! No, Pater"—as Dorrisant began to protest—"no, it's no use. I shall write the card this moment, and you must send it."

It was the queen of the house at her most imperious, and Dorrisant shrugged his shoulders in useless expostulation as she turned to her writing-table. When he left Valentine a moment or two later the card of invitation addressed to Robert Scudamore, Esq., was in his hand, and his first action was to despatch it to its destination by a special messenger.

At eleven o'clock that night the pretty house looked its very prettiest; and moving through the rooms, amid all the colour, light, and music, was a crowd of well-dressed men and women, talking, dancing, coming and going, all at once, it seemed.

Just inside the drawing-room door stood Valentine, receiving her guests, gracious and graceful, dressed in a wonderful white silk frock and carrying a beautiful bouquet her stepfather had given her two hours before. Mark Dorrisant stood beside her, and more than once she said to him with laughing defiance in her pretty eyes: "Where is Mr. Scudamore?"

The rooms were nearly full when she heard her name pronounced, and turning quickly, found Dorrisant standing before her with a big, red-moustached man by his side.

"Valentine," said Mark Dorrisant, "may I introduce my old friend Scudamore?"

CHAPTER XIII. MR. DORRISANT FINDS MRS. CARRYL ALONE.

"GOOD night, Mr. Scudamore. You must let us see as much as possible of you, as you are in London for such an uncertain time. Will you come and dine with us quietly on Friday?"

It was Valentine who spoke, and she stood beside a dismantled supper-table among the last lingerers who had stayed for a merry little supper with the house party. Of these lingerers, Mr. Scudamore had made one on Valentine's own invitation. After her first reception of her stepfather's friend, she had had very little opportunity of talking to him, and on his presenting himself to her to say good-night, she had asked him very prettily to stay that she might have an opportunity of making his acquaintance. He had sat by her side at supper, but though such an occasion, with the curious sense of freedom it produces, is eminently calculated to create a rapid friendliness, it is not conducive to keenness of critical perception, and it is more than doubtful whether Valentine's impressions of Mr. Scudamore at the end were much more definite than they had been at the beginning. The party had been an unqualified success. Four or five hours of triumph is an intoxicating thing, and Valentine had given herself up to the excitement of the moment with an abandonment which was a new characteristic of hers. She held out her hand with a

charming smile as she spoke, and Mr. Scudamore answered:

"I should rather think I would! Many thanks, Miss Clinton. By Jove, my old friend Dorrisant is in luck."

It was by no means the reply that conventional good breeding demanded. It was characterised, as was the speaker's entire personality, by an excess of colour. Mr. Scudamore was a fair, florid man, with rather coarse features, grey eyes, and a burly figure; his voice was loud and a little rough; his phrases, as Valentine had thought once or twice with a smile at her stepfather's words as to his friend's want of polish, were distinctly vigorous; his clothes fitted him ill, and he wore too much jewellery. But there was a ring of unmistakeable earnest in his voice as he spoke his singularly chosen words, and the tone alone impressed itself on Valentine.

When an event which has created a good deal of preliminary excitement, becomes an accomplished fact, it is apt to leave a blank which the mind seeks instinctively to fill. Such a blank made itself felt in the house in Bruton Street, the dance being over; and the introduction of Mr. Scudamore upon the scene seemed to have been especially preordained to fill it. A new interest was wanted, and Mr. Scudamore, all the more by reason of what Mark Dorrisant called, with a smile, his "eccentricities," was installed in the vacant place so suddenly that he was a feature in the life of Valentine's house before a week had elapsed from his first visit there.

His old friend's stay in London would probably be a short one, Mark Dorrisant had told Valentine, and this was of course a reason for concentrating any attentions that were to be paid to him. It also threw the embellishing veil of transitoriness over intercourse with him. He had, on the same authority, few friends in London; and so it came about that hardly a day passed unmarked by an appointment that either brought him to Bruton Street, or brought Valentine and her escort to some more neutral meeting-place.

It is hardly possible to overrate the influence on subsequent perceptiveness of the mental attitude in which a new acquaintance is originally approached. Valentine's original attitude towards her stepfather's friend had not only been one of prejudice in his favour; it had presupposed certain superficial differences between him and her ordinary acquaintances, and had ascribed to him deep-rooted and less obvious ex-

cellencies. That first conversation with Mark Dorrisant on the subject of his friend had created in her mind, on sufficiently slight foundation, an idea of Mr. Scudamore to which she adapted all her subsequent impressions. Blemishes which would have utterly condemned any man introduced to her under ordinary circumstances—blemishes which for the stately, delicate "Queen Val" were as unpardonable crimes—were unconsciously condoned by her in Scudamore with one of those complete relaxations of all standards in favour of an individual which can never be exhibited except by the daintily autocratic in manners or morals, and which are proportionately perplexing.

It was, perhaps, another illustration of the law of first impressions that Geoffrey did not take to Mr. Scudamore. Geoffrey's first impression of that gentleman had been received before any knowledge of his relation with his guardian had been present in his mind to colour that impression; he had recognised him instantly as the man he had noticed in the Park "staring at Val," as he put it, and the effect that stare had produced on him was not to be obliterated. He never alluded to the subject again, and never gave expression to his sentiments towards his guardian's friend; he only dropped into the background when Scudamore was of the party, and became unusually quiet.

Three weeks passed by, and twice Valentine had "honoured him," to use Scudamore's own phrase, by becoming his guest with Mrs. Carryl, Mark Dorrisant, and Geoffrey at dinner at one of the big restaurants, and at a theatre afterwards; and on each occasion she had found on her plate a bouquet which was a miracle of costliness and beauty.

"One can't have too much of a good thing, Miss Clinton, eh?" he would say when, as often happened, he appeared at the house in Bruton Street laden with flowers. And Valentine would accept his offering graciously; taking the rather too obvious homage of her stepfather's old friend as a pleasant matter of course, and treating him with a charming mixture of patronage and kindness.

At the end of the three weeks there came the New Year, and with the New Year there came to Valentine, "with Robert Scudamore's best wishes," a magnificent diamond bracelet. Whether it was the present in itself, whether it was anything Scudamore said to her when she returned

it to him with a proud little speech as to the impossibility of her accepting it, or whether it was simply a dawning realisation of the fact that Mr. Scudamore by no means considered her merely as his old friend's stepdaughter, it is impossible to say, but from that time her manner to him changed. It became uncertain and capricious.

Scudamore had begun to let fall hints that he thought of settling in London "for the present," and one morning, during the morning ride in which he invariably joined, some words of his to this effect, spoken with a good deal of intention to Valentine, resulted in a pronounced access of haughty contradiction on her part. It was in the afternoon of the same day that Dorrisant, coming into the drawing-room at three o'clock, found Mrs. Carryl there alone.

He smiled pleasantly, and spoke casually about the weather, as he strolled up to the fire. She answered him with shy eagerness, lifting a pair of admiring eyes to his face. From the first, Mark Dorrisant had treated his stepdaughter's companion with a kindly deference which never failed, and which was as absolutely consistent with itself as it was inconsistent with its object. To Mrs. Carryl, in consequence, he was the most perfect being the world contained.

"Where is Valentine?" he said idly, when they had chatted together for a few minutes.

"I don't quite know," said Mrs. Carryl nervously. "I've not seen her since lunch. She—I'm afraid she was rather annoyed about something."

Valentine's demeanour had left no doubt on that score, and Mark Dorrisant smiled slightly at Mrs. Carryl's words. Mrs. Carryl, vaguely conscious of encouragement, went on with timid venturesomeness:

"Mr. Scudamore did not come back with you to-day?"

"No," answered Dorrisant, with another smile. "Poor old Scudamore, he had had rather a bad time."

Mrs. Carryl glanced up at him with a look of tentative comprehension on her face; but she did not speak. She had always a guilty feeling in discussing Valentine.

There was a pause, and then the smile died on Mark Dorrisant's lips, and an expression of gravity settled on his face.

"Things are not going well," he said thoughtfully. "Between Valentine and poor Scudamore, I mean, of course. I hoped they would have settled matters by this time."

He spoke as though the relations between

Valentine and Mr. Scudamore were a recognised fact, and Mrs. Carryl let her work fall in her lap as she lifted a startled face to his. It was the first time the subject had been put into words, and her own hazy perceptions, which had only begun to dawn in the course of the last two or three days, had by no means reached that stage of development assumed by Mark Dorrisant's speech. He paused as though to give her time to take in his words, and then continued seriously and confidentially:

"I was immensely surprised at first, I need not tell you. On the surface it did not seem at all likely that Scudamore would attract a girl like Valentine, or, to tell you the truth, that she was at all the kind of girl to attract him. I don't think that anything has ever given me greater pleasure than to see how it was with both of them."

"With both of them?" murmured Mrs. Carryl vaguely. "Then you really think that Valentine——"

"I don't think she has left us much room for doubt," returned Mark Dorrisant, with another smile. "She has given him every encouragement, and we are not going to insult her by thinking that she would have done so unless she—liked him."

"Of course not," said Mrs. Carryl feebly, for the first time recognising Valentine's conduct of the past weeks as encouragement, and wondering helplessly why she had not thought of it in that light before.

"No," continued Mark Dorrisant decidedly, "there can be no doubt that she likes him; there is every reason for it," he added, "for Scudamore's is a thoroughly sterling character. But that only makes her present capriciousness the more difficult to explain." He paused again, staring thoughtfully down at the rug. Then he said very slowly: "Did it ever occur to you, Mrs. Carryl, that Valentine had some sort of girlish affection for that agent of hers, Kenneth Gaunt?"

"Mr. Gaunt!" exclaimed Mrs. Carryl, in profound astonishment. "Oh, surely not! Oh, no, really! Why, they quarrelled dreadfully."

"It sometimes happens," said Mark Dorrisant, in the same slow, significant manner, "that a girl like our dear Queen Val, accustomed to homage and subservience, is attracted by sheer force of novelty to a man who, as you put it, quarrels with her. I don't suggest for a moment that he ever thought of her. On the contrary, I have good reason to know that he entertained a violent dislike for her; but I am convinced

that she created in herself a romantic attachment for him. I became aware of it when—well, at a time I do not care to talk about."

"Dear me!" ejaculated Mrs. Carryl helplessly. "Oh, dear me!"

"Now, Valentine is exceptionally constant," pursued Dorrisant, "and I personally have no doubt that it is loyalty to this imaginary feeling on her part that is urging her to inflict so much pain on poor Scudamore—and on herself. It is most unfortunate! I should have thought she would have had too much pride——"

He broke off and walked to the window, followed by Mrs. Carryl's bewildered eyes. She was far too confused for speech. Mark Dorrisant said no more. He stood there looking out of window, holding Mrs. Carryl's thoughts to the subject—even had they been inclined to stray, which they were not—by his apparent absorption in it.

At last, after a long silence, he turned abruptly back towards the fire, as the door opened and Valentine came into the room. She was looking very disdainful, very imperious, and rather pale.

Mark Dorrisant was going out, he said, and after a minute or two he went away, leaving the two women alone together.

His departure was followed by a silence. Mrs. Carryl had taken up her work on Valentine's entrance with a guilty start, and was putting uncertain stitches into it, her whole appearance conveying an impression of startled preoccupation. Valentine wandered restlessly about the room. At last the latter sat down in a low chair.

"It's a hateful afternoon, Marion!" she exclaimed irritably.

Instead of answering her, evidently hardly hearing her, Mrs. Carryl lifted her weak little face for a moment, with an unusual excitement on it, and said:

"Don't you think that Mr. Scudamore is much nicer than Mr. Gaunt?"

Valentine had been leaning carelessly back in her chair. As the last word came from Mrs. Carryl's lips, the half-smile with which she had listened died on her lips, and her hand clenched itself round the arm of her chair. There was a moment's dead silence, and Mrs. Carryl looked frightened. Then Valentine moved, stretched out her hand deliberately for a fire-screen, and said carelessly:

"What a very extraordinary question, Marion!" Her voice was a little hard.

Mrs. Carryl's alarm subsided slightly. Not having been justified by results it

proved absolutely stimulating, and left a sensational desire to experience the feeling of crisis again. With great daring she began again, ignoring Valentine's comment.

"You haven't taken a dislike to Mr. Scudamore, have you?" she said tentatively.

Valentine turned the fire-screen in her hand, and the faintest touch of colour came into her face.

"Why should I take a dislike to him?" she said. Her indifference was rather excessive.

"That's just it!" said Mrs. Carryl, preparing with timid excitement to venture further. "He isn't the sort of man one could get to dislike when once one knows him, is he? He—he has such a sterling character, hasn't he? But you haven't seemed to like him so much lately."

"I think we won't discuss Mr. Scudamore, please, Marion!"

At any other time the coldly spoken words would have reduced Mrs. Carryl to abject silence, and possibly to tears. But this afternoon, between the mental thrill of the new idea presented to her by Mark Dorrisant, and her own sense of unparalleled daring in having opened the subject with Valentine at all, she was absolutely impervious to them.

"I am very sorry for him, poor man," she went on, with an uneven kind of courage in her voice. "You did encourage him at first, didn't you——"

She was interrupted. With a cry of indignation and astonishment Valentine started to her feet, and stood looking down on her, her eyes flashing, her hand clenched fiercely round the screen.

"Encourage him!" she cried. "Marion, how dare you!"

Like many another timid person spurred on to a fictitious daring, Mrs. Carryl had lost all sense of proportion, and had said a really audacious thing almost without being aware of it. Frightened out of her wits now by the storm she had raised, but still too far carried out of her ordinary self for her ordinary submission, she proceeded to defend herself wildly and incoherently.

"I can't help it!" she cried. "You did encourage him, Valentine—every one will tell you you did. It isn't my fault. And if you are drawing off now because of Mr. Gaunt, that isn't my fault either. Only I think it's a dreadful pity when he's such a nice man—and Mr. Gaunt was horrid, and besides, he never cared for you at all, and Mr. Scudamore——"

Valentine had listened to her words so far with an astounded expression. She felt much as though a very tame canary had suddenly flown in her face. But when Mrs. Carryl came to her words about Kenneth Gaunt that expression changed suddenly into another, indefinable in the multiplicity of emotions it suggested, except for the outraged pride with which her eyes were filled, and which grew in them until she suddenly stretched out her hand, and laid it on Mrs. Carryl's with a touch that reduced that foolhardy little woman to quivering sobs and tears.

"Do you mean to say," said Valentine, "that you think I ever thought twice about Mr. Gaunt?"

"Oh, I am very sorry, Valentine!" sobbed Mrs. Carryl; her fictitious courage all gone, her native timidity returned with a violent reaction to make of her an abject heap of misery. "I didn't mean to vex you, indeed I didn't."

"Do you think it?"

"Why, there must be some reason for the way you treat Mr. Scudamore, and if you cared for Mr. Gaunt——"

"I didn't care for Mr. Gaunt! I never thought of him. I cared for justice, that was all."

Sharp and ringing the denial had come, with a defiance in it far fiercer than was needed to subdue Mrs. Carryl. It was succeeded by a pause, broken only by the sound of Mrs. Carryl's feeble sobs, and then Valentine said in a quick, excited voice:

"Does any one else think this? My stepfather?"

"Yes," murmured Mrs. Carryl tearfully. "Oh, don't be vexed, Valentine! What else could any one think?"

The handle of the fire-screen snapped suddenly in Valentine's fingers. She threw the pieces fiercely from her, and began to walk up and down the room with impetuous steps, her face alight and working with excitement.

"I'm very sorry, Valentine!" wept Mrs. Carryl.

At that most inopportune moment the door opened with no warning sound of footsteps on the softly carpeted landing outside, and the footman announced:

"Mr. Scudamore!"

And Mr. Scudamore followed his name so promptly, that Mrs. Carryl had barely time to flee by the door at the other end of the double drawing-room before his burly presence was in the room.

At the first sound of the footman's

announcement Valentine stopped abruptly in her walk, and a strange wave of colour rushed over her face. It passed, and left her eyes flashing still, but with a light of sudden resolution. She turned quickly and met Mr. Scudamore with her hand outstretched, and her sweetest smile.

"I am so glad to see you," she said graciously. "Have you come to see me or my stepfather? I'm afraid he is out, but if I shall do——" she broke off with an irresistible smile and pointed carelessly to a seat.

Mr. Scudamore had made his appearance with a boisterous appearance of ease, which was suggestive of distinct want of ease. A shade of anxiety, almost amounting to nervousness, had been visible in his rough features. For a moment the reception accorded to him seemed to place him completely at a loss, and his greeting, as he shook hands with an enthusiasm hardly compatible with a second meeting in one day, was more or less incoherent. Then he seated himself, awkwardly enough, in the chair pointed out to him.

"I'm awfully glad to find you like this, Miss Clinton," he said brusquely. "I was afraid I'd offended you."

Valentine laughed gently, and sat down. Her cheeks were very flushed.

"I'm afraid I was cross," she said graciously. "I hope I wasn't very rude? I'm so sorry."

"You weren't cross," was Scudamore's prompt, if somewhat rough, disclaimer. "And I'd do with you a great deal ruder to have you—to have you like this afterwards."

"You see, I'm rather spoilt," said Valentine, smiling at him, and apparently hardly hearing his words. "I have always had my own way—and I like it."

"Why, of course; you would, you know," assented Scudamore eagerly. "You're the kind of girl who ought to have her own way."

His countenance by this time was positively radiant. Perhaps it was the effect of reaction from the uncertainty in which he had entered the room; or perhaps it was the sense of contrast between her past mood and the mood in which she now met him, but something seemed to create in him a kind of excitement and elation. He paused a moment, and then leant suddenly forward, his face very red and eager.

"Miss Clinton," he began, "I've got something to say to you."

The colour died suddenly out of Valentine's face, her very lips whitened, and she rose impulsively and rang the bell.

"We'll have some tea," she said breathlessly. "And Mrs. Carryl will like to see you. I'll send for her."

CHAPTER XIV. AN UNEXPECTED MEETING.

A WEEK passed by. The last days of January ran out in alternations of fog and rain, and the first of February brought with it uncertain gleams of sunshine, that seemed by contrast like a promise of spring itself.

Mrs. Carryl's temporary insanity—her conduct in daring Valentine's displeasure seemed to her, as she looked back on it, nothing less—was never alluded to. Its superficial effects were traceable in the deprecating timidity of the culprit's manner, and in a slight coldness in Valentine's manner towards her.

But to every one else Valentine was unusually sweet and gracious during that week. She was very bright, and very light-hearted, even a little unnaturally so.

For Mr. Scudamore she had always her most charming smile, and he basked in that smile as if it were to him the rays of the sun. Only she avoided being left alone with him, sometimes seeming to rebel against the idea almost involuntarily.

It was part of the excitability which had become characteristic of her, that on the morning of the first of February she came down to breakfast full of enthusiasm on the subject of Geoffrey's birthday. It was a subject that had dropped somewhat out of sight in the newer and originally apparently temporary interest of Mr. Scudamore. Geoffrey himself, however, having had very little interest in Mr. Scudamore's society, had had more leisure to give to the consideration of his own future. The first sign of Valentine's interest that morning was quite enough to draw him into eager and confidential talk. Directly after breakfast he followed Valentine into her morning-room, and established himself so that he could look up into her face as she sat at her writing-table. And meeting his eager, anxious eyes, Valentine laid down her pen.

It was nearly half-past eleven; they had been talking for more than an hour.

Geoffrey had set forth his plans with a manliness and thoughtfulness new to him, and born of the sense of responsibility

which had gradually grown up in him ; and Valentin, as he talked, had lost something of her restless brightness, and, as she grew more sympathetic, had grown graver and gentler. She had discussed his ideas with him, had drawn him out to enlarge upon all his theories, and at last the subject was practically exhausted, and a silence ensued. It was broken by Geoffrey. He threw himself luxuriously back against the sofa, clasped his hands behind his head, and said contentedly :

"This is like old times, Val."

She started slightly, and turned her face towards him with a vague smile, as he went on, boyishly :

"We haven't had a morning like this for ages, have we? It's most awfully jolly!"

The room in which they were was at the front of the house, and from where she sat Valentine could see into the street below. She was gazing down with dreamy eyes when, quite suddenly, she started ; a hot colour rushed over her face, and she rose and rang the bell peremptorily. Taken by surprise Geoffrey looked at her enquiringly as she stood waiting for the servant's appearance, but she did not speak until her summons was answered.

"I am not at home," she said then imperiously. "Not at home to any one, mind!"

A fitful gleam of sunshine was lighting up the street, and underneath the windows its watery rays fell on two horses, one of which carried a groom, while from the other a large red-moustached figure was dismounting.

The servant left the room, and Valentine turned once more to Geoffrey, her cheeks flushed, her eyes shining.

"I think I must go out, Geoff," she said abruptly. "It's a shame to waste the sunshine, and I want to see about your birthday present."

"I'm coming with you, then," he said, starting up with a laugh. "Coming to see what it is, Val!"

"Coming with me!" she returned, laughing rather excitedly. "You'll do no such thing, sir! I'm going alone. Good-bye—till we meet again. I don't quite know when that will be. I shan't be at home to lunch, and I'm engaged all the afternoon; and then you're going out to dinner, aren't you? But till whenever it is—good-bye!"

And with a gay little gesture of farewell she disappeared.

She spent nearly an hour in a round of shopping, throwing herself into her occupation with a feverish energy and excitement. And when, at the end of that time, she gave her coachman the order to drive to one of the large jewellers in Regent Street, there were tired lines about the pretty, spirited mouth. She ordered the set of studs which was to be her birthday present to Geoffrey, and turned to leave the shop.

She had just passed out on to the pavement when suddenly she stopped short; stopped as though she had been transfixed where she stood, her face quite white, her eyes fixed on the approaching figure of a man. It was Kenneth Gaunt.

He was coming along rapidly, looking neither to the right nor the left, and he did not see her. He was in the act of passing her, still not seeing her, when she moved forward impulsively and held out her hand.

"How do you do?" she said in a low, quick voice.

With a start so violent that he almost seemed to exclaim, though no word passed his lips, Kenneth Gaunt stopped short abruptly and stared into the white face before him as though he were looking at a ghost. For that one moment every drop of blood seemed to recede from his face. Then it came slowly back again, a deep sullen red, and he took the hand held out to him, almost reluctantly.

"How do you do, Miss Clinton?" he said, and he said it ungraciously enough.

Having shaken hands he made a movement as if to pass on, but Valentine stopped him. Her eyes were fixed upon his face; they had grown wide and pitiful, and her lips trembled as she spoke.

Kenneth Gaunt's appearance was greatly changed since the days when he had gone about at Templecombe a prosperous and well satisfied young man. It was not strange that he should show no signs of desiring to prolong an interview with any one who had known him then. He was shabbily dressed, and he was keenly conscious as he stood before Miss Clinton of the deficiencies of his appearance; but his face told far more than did his worn coat. It was the face of a man who had passed through the cruellest process to which youth and hope can be subjected; that process of continual failure and disappointment which makes those two hard elements of human life seem normal and inevitable. The features were haggard and sharpened;

the mouth was set into a sullen endurance, and the eyes held a fierce bitterness. All that air of well-being which had been such a conspicuous feature with him had disappeared.

"I—I am very glad to see you," said Valentine, faltering in most unusual fashion. Then, drawing up her head with a stately movement, which was an outward sign of the effort with which she mastered herself, she went on with that dignity with which a woman covers so much, not only from others, but from herself. "Are you living in London now?"

"Yes," answered Kenneth curtly, "at present."

His eyes were fixed on her now with a longing gaze in them of which Valentine only saw the bitterness, and she said, with something of an effort:

"Will you tell me what you are doing?"

Kenneth laughed harshly.

"It's easily told," he said bitterly.

"Nothing, Miss Clinton."

"Have you done nothing since——"

"Nothing," he returned. "There doesn't appear to be any demand, even in London, for doubtful characters. I imagine the market is overstocked."

"Oh, don't!" cried Valentine. "Don't!"

He had lifted his hat, and moved to leave her, but her words arrested him perforce. He turned his worn young face to her once more and paused.

"I beg your pardon, Miss Clinton," he said gently. "You were always more than just to me, and it was an abominable thing to say to you. May I put you into your carriage?"

Valentine made no answer. Her fingers closed on a little parcel that she held so tightly that its contents were crushed and spoiled. She turned and walked mechanically to her brougham, got in, and allowed Kenneth to close the door for her. Then he shook hands with her in silence, and the carriage drove off.

And Valentine leant back in her place, her face set and proud; oblivious of the noise of Regent Street, oblivious of the fine, drizzling rain that was beginning to fall, saying to herself, again and again:

"I am just to him; only just to him."

CHAPTER XV.

MR. SCUDAMORE IS ACCEPTED.

IT was seven o'clock in the evening, and Valentine was standing in the morning-room. It still wanted more than half an

hour to dinner-time, but Valentine was dressed, and rather magnificently dressed, for she was going later with Mrs. Carryl to a large "at home" at a very smart house.

The magnificence suited her stately young figure to perfection; the way in which her hair was dressed seemed to accentuate the curve of her neck, and the jewels in it seemed the natural setting for the proud, delicate face. It was a very proud face this evening and very pale, and her pose, as she stood with one small foot on the fender, was defiant in its haughtiness. She was apparently waiting, for she turned expectantly when the door opened and Mark Dorrisant came in.

He was also in evening dress. He and Geoffrey were going together to dine with a friend—a Mr. Everett, in Hyde Park Gardens.

"You wanted to speak to me, Queen Val," he said. "I have finished dressing with all speed accordingly; for we must be off in about ten minutes."

"Thank you," she answered. "Yes, I do want to speak to you, please."

Her manner was rather unusual. She had smiled as he opened the door, but her tone was rather distant.

He glanced at her, and then quietly waited for her to speak.

Without any circumlocution she began at once, her voice firm and unhesitating.

"I want to speak to you about Mr. Gaunt," she said. "I am very sorry to give you pain—perhaps I thought more of that than of justice—but something must be done!"

She spoke with a calmness too lofty for perfect reality, and Mark Dorrisant listened with his eyes on her face, a quick flash leaping into them on her first words, to be instantly subdued into a deeper gravity. There was an instant's pause as she stopped, and then before he answered her he averted his eyes from her face. And as he did so the faintest tinge of colour touched Valentine's pale cheeks.

"I am afraid I must ask you to explain," he said gently.

"Mr. Gaunt's prospects in life have been utterly ruined while he was in my service. I, myself, by a most unfortunate chain of circumstances, played a large part in bringing about a ruin founded on injustice and mistake. It is my duty, from every point of view, to see that something is done to make amends."

She paused, but Mark Dorrisant did not speak. He was gazing steadily down at

the fire, his handsome face very grave. And Valentine, touched by his silence, went on affectionately:

"Pater," she said, "I know you only did what you thought right. I can't bear to oppose you. But you can't prove his guilt any more than I can prove—than his innocence can be proved, and is it just that a man's life should be spoilt on such terms?"

She paused abruptly, and Dorrisant lifted his eyes and looked at her. The colour deepened in her cheeks; her face, which had softened into pleading as she spoke, set itself into prouder lines than before, and she went on:

"I have spoken to you about it because I want you to see Mr. Gaunt and find out how we can help him. He can get nothing to do. That is our fault, and something must be done!"

Dorrisant looked at her again.

"Have you seen him?" he said quickly.

Valentine stretched out one beautiful bare arm and clasped her fan as it lay on the mantelpiece. The white fingers shook, but it was with no gentle emotion. Her eyes were blazing.

"I met him to-day in Regent Street!" she said haughtily.

Mark Dorrisant turned away, as if with an impulse of most delicate consideration, and looked at her no more. The colour in her cheeks became a burning crimson; then it ebbed away and left her face quite white. Looking straight at him, and seeming to keep herself still by an intense effort of which the strain of that outstretched arm was an outward sign, she said:

"I cannot tell you where he lives, but you will be able to find him, of course! Will you go to him, please, and see what can be done?"

Mark Dorrisant turned, and took her hand with gentle force into both his own.

"I would do anything to please you, Valentine!" he said gravely. "But there are more reasons than one why I cannot do that."

He released her hand and turned towards the door. Valentine made no effort to detain him; apparently all her force was absorbed in the tumult of passionate sensation with which her white face was eloquent—outraged pride, wounded self-respect, passionate denial—for she stood there perfectly motionless.

A few moments passed and then the sound of Geoffrey's voice, as he answered Mark Dorrisant's call, followed instantly by

the closing sound of the street-door, as the two set out for their dinner-party together, all fell on Valentine's ears clearly, but without making any impression on her consciousness.

The dinner-bell rang at last. Valentine roused herself, crossed the room with a strange expression on her face, and went downstairs.

All through dinner she hardly spoke, and that absorbed expression never altered; Mrs. Carryl, after receiving several monosyllabic answers, decided feebly that "Valentine was angry about something." The expression was on her pale face still, when she was received by her hostess, some two hours later, and passed on into a crowded drawing-room.

"How do you do, Miss Clinton?"

The speaker was Mr. Scudamore, presenting an imposing array of white shirt-front to the public gaze, and as she turned with a slight start at the sound of his voice, Valentine's face changed for the first time, and a light came into her eyes.

"How do you do?" she said, holding out her hand eagerly, and smiling at him. "What a hot room, isn't it? Have you been here long?"

Valentine had herself introduced Mr. Scudamore to their hostess, so his presence could have been no surprise to her. Nevertheless, there was a certain excitement about her only attributable to some sudden emotion. Scudamore looked at her shining eyes with his own full of admiration, and then said, apparently as a daring and hopeless experiment:

"Let us go on into the conservatory; it's ever so much cooler there."

She hesitated an instant, then she turned to him with a quick movement.

"Yes, Mr. Scudamore," she said, "I think the conservatory sounds very attractive."

She turned as she spoke and walked away by his side, her eyes brighter than ever. Her progress through the room was rather a long business, since she had to exchange greetings with acquaintances at every step; but she pursued her way steadily, never allowing herself to get separated from the burly figure which followed her with dogged persistency, and in the course of time they reached the curtained entrance which led into the conservatory, and through which could be seen a vista of tall palms and ferns, occupied by only some half-dozen figures. Without an instant's pause or hesitation Valentine crossed the threshold. There was no one whom

she knew in sight, and she and Scudamore were practically alone.

"Suppose we sit down?" he suggested.

His voice was uneven as though with some unusual excitement, and his florid face was flushed.

"It would be rather nice," assented Valentine.

There was a touch of excitement about her, too, and the ribbon of her fan was twisted tightly round her fingers. At the farther end of the conservatory there was a seat behind a huge mass of palms. Towards this Scudamore moved, and she moved by his side, the light on her face growing more defiant—self-defiant, it seemed. She sat down, Scudamore seated himself beside her, and there was a silence. She made no attempt to break it, and at last Scudamore said abruptly:

"Miss Clinton, I don't suppose there's any need for me to beat about the bush much, and I'm not likely to get a better opportunity than this. I set my mind on having you for my wife the first moment that I saw you." He paused, and then added brusquely, with a fierce passion in his rough voice: "Is it to be 'yes' or 'no'?"

Almost before the words were uttered, Valentine turned to him, her face as white as the feathers of her fan, and held out her hand.

"It is 'yes,'" she said, in a low voice. Then, as he made a rough movement as if to draw her to him, she rose with a strange, strangled laugh.

"I think—not here!" she said.

There had been a strange ring of triumph in her laugh, and the same triumph was gleaming in her eyes as she and Scudamore passed back into the drawing-room together.

CHAPTER XVI.

MR. GEOFFREY IS FORGOTTEN.

MR. SCUDAMORE was resplendently dressed, in his usual florid taste, when he stood on the doorstep of the house in Bruton Street on the following morning. He carried a large bouquet, and he had, apparently, a smaller and more precious object in his waistcoat pocket, for he was in the act of feeling therein for the third time when the door was opened to him. Mr. Scudamore and the bouquet were shown into the empty drawing-room, and, left alone, he walked absently across the room, to where a large coloured photograph of

Valentine stood upon a table, and stood staring at it, and fingering that small object in his waistcoat pocket. There was a curious mixture of expressions in his face this morning. The triumph and satisfaction of an accepted suitor were there, roughly enough written on his rough features; but beneath there was a shamefaced uneasiness that was almost compunction. He had not been alone for many seconds when the door opened quickly. Scudamore looked up as quickly. But it was not Valentine who entered; it was Mark Dorrisant.

It was suggestive of a complete understanding of some sort between Mark Dorrisant and his old friend, that neither attempted to shake hands. Scudamore turned sharply round where he stood, and contented himself with a nod. Dorrisant dispensed with any salutation at all.

"Well," he said, "it's through."

The words in themselves were extraordinarily curt, but even their form was not so utterly unlike the Mark Dorrisant his stepdaughter knew as was the tone in which they were spoken; it was hard, matter-of-fact, entirely unsympathetic, and his face was, like it, essentially hard and capable-looking. He was very pale, though, and there was something about his eyes which, if it was not his usual expression—and it certainly was not—was not exactly consistent with the business-like decision of his present look and manner. They were preoccupied and intent, and suggested that he was by no means concentrated on the matter in hand.

Mr. Scudamore, however, had apparently no attention to spare for any peculiarities about his friend. He met Dorrisant's eyes for a moment, and then he shifted his gaze restlessly and uncomfortably, and that shamefaced air increased distinctly.

"Yes," he muttered, "I suppose so."

Dorrisant's eyes seemed to concentrate themselves with a quick effort on the sullen figure before him, and he said sharply:

"Are you not satisfied?"

The other man hesitated.

"Oh, yes," he growled. "It's all right enough; but I never felt what a brute I am before."

Dorrisant laughed a cynical and most astonished laugh, and then that strange intentness on something else came suddenly back into his eyes as a touch fell on the handle of the door. It opened, and

Valentine stood on the threshold. And as his eyes fell on her, Mark Dorrisant's face changed completely.

"Ah!" he exclaimed tenderly, "here she is."

Valentine was very pale. She was wearing a dark cloth frock, from which her bright hair and delicate face stood out in dainty distinctness. There were shadows about the curiously unflinching eyes, and there were resolute lines about her mouth which seemed in some mysterious way to take away her youth. She put out her left hand to her stepfather as he came up to her with a little affectionate gesture, and then as Scudamore advanced, clumsily enough, she gave him her right hand, saying simply:

"Good morning."

Dorrisant smiled pleasantly.

"Well," he said, "I will be off. Unfortunately, I've a business engagement which will keep me out to lunch. You won't miss me, though, I dare say." He paused, and then drew Valentine gently to his side. "You've chosen the best fellow in the world, Queen Val," he said tenderly. "I think he almost deserves his luck, and I can't say more than that, as I've been telling him."

He kissed her gently on the forehead, and turned, evidently to shake hands with his friend. But Mr. Scudamore had turned his back abruptly, his modesty apparently wounded by even such delicate singing of his praises, and with an affectionate smile, Mark Dorrisant left the room.

His departure was succeeded by a silence. Valentine moved to the fire, and bent towards it, holding her hands mechanically to the blaze, her lips white and compressed. Scudamore still stood by the table fumbling with his bouquet. At last, with a sudden effort, he laid it roughly on the table, put his hand once more into his waistcoat pocket, drew out a small jeweller's case, and went awkwardly across the room to the slender figure by the fire.

"You did mean what you said last night, didn't you?" he said clumsily. "I'm not fit to black your boots. I feel as if it couldn't be true—as if, by Heaven! it oughtn't to be true! I——" He hesitated and stopped.

She had raised her head on his approach, and was standing now turned towards him, looking in the quiet self-surrender of her expression lovelier than she had ever looked in her life. All her delicate gracefulness was heightened by contrast with the rough

figure before her, and, as if the sense of her beauty was stealing gradually over him, there dawned in the man's eyes, and grew there, a fierce and passionate admiration. He opened the jewel-case hastily, and went on in another tone.

"After all, I don't suppose I'm worse than most," he said bolsterously. "The best of us would seem a baddish lot to you, I take it. And, of course, I know you meant it. Look here, I've brought you a ring."

He took the ring in question from its case and held it towards her. There seemed to be some kind of struggle going on within him, and there was in his face a diffidence very strange to see in so rough a man.

It was a very handsome marquise ring of diamonds, and Valentine looked at it for an instant in silence. Then she looked up at the giver, and held out her left hand to him.

"Thank you," she said gently. "It is beautiful."

Then, as he took her hand into his own, which shook a little, and slipped the ring on to the slender finger, a burning flush swept over her face, leaving it paler than before.

Mr. Scudamore put the ring in its place, and still holding her hand, glanced nervously from it to her face.

"It isn't a bad ring, is it?" he said, with a poor attempt at swaggering ease; "won't you pay me for it?"

For an instant Valentine hesitated, and shrank back involuntarily. His face was very close to hers, and his eyes were eager. Then she bent towards him, and lifted her white cheek as a child might have done. Whether it was the absolute simplicity of the movement, or whether it was a sudden supreme assertion of that singular diffidence, he could not have told, but Scudamore found himself suddenly arrested. He had been conscious of a vague intention of taking her into his arms and kissing that lovely face to his heart's content, but now he found that he could not carry his intention into effect. He bent down, still holding her hand in his, and kissed her on the cheek gently, almost reverently.

A moment later and the luncheon-bell was ringing; she had drawn her hand gently away, and he was cursing himself for having let his moment slip.

"Shall we go down?" said Valentine; there was a new kindness for him in her voice if he could have appreciated its cadence. "Mrs. Carryl will be waiting."

She opened the door as she spoke to find Mrs. Carryl just crossing the landing on her way downstairs. The little woman's timid congratulations were boisterously claimed by Scudamore, who seemed bent on demonstrating his perfect ease to the world at large, and Valentine was just following them into the dining-room—Scudamore's manners were not a strong point with him—when she was stopped by the footman.

"If you please, miss," he said, "could you tell me when Mr. Dorrisant will be in?"

"I don't know," answered Valentine; "not until late in the afternoon, I think," and then as the man's face lengthened perceptibly, she added, "Why?"

"It's Mr. Geoffrey, miss," the man answered nervously. "If I'd known Mr. Dorrisant was going out I'd have spoken to him before he went. I've just been up again, miss, and it doesn't seem as if I could make him hear."

"Mr. Geoffrey?" repeated Valentine incomprehendingly. And then, with a sudden flash of understanding, she added quickly: "Do you mean that Mr. Geoffrey is not up yet?"

"That's it, miss," was the anxious answer. "He didn't answer when I called him this morning, and Mr. Dorrisant said not to disturb him as he had a headache last night, and you know he often does lie in bed late, miss."

"And when did you go to him again?" said Valentine anxiously.

The man coughed deprecatingly.

"Well, miss," he said, "I'm very sorry to say as I forgot him. He flashed across me all of a sudden just about twelve, and I went up and knocked, but he didn't answer; Mr. Dorrisant was in the drawing-room then, miss, and I didn't like to intrude, and I just went downstairs for a minute to speak to Wilson."

Miss Clinton's probable engagement had been a much-discussed topic in her household for the last two or three weeks. Mr. Scudamore's early appearance that morning had rendered it a far more engrossing subject than Mr. Geoffrey's possible indisposition.

"And Mr. Dorrisant must have gone out then, miss," the man went on. "I'm very sorry, I'm sure, miss; but I've just been knocking very loud, and I thought you ought to be told!"

The perspiration was standing on the man's embarrassed face, and he glanced,

as though instinctively seeking manly assistance, to where Scudamore stood with Mrs. Carryl just inside the dining-room door. Apparently that loud knocking of which he spoke, and the silence which had answered it, had shaken the man's nerves, for a curious atmosphere of dismay seemed to radiate from him, and envelope the little group.

"Suppose I go up and see?" suggested Scudamore, coming forward, and speaking to Valentine in tones of hasty reassurance, which were rather out of proportion to the simple facts as they stood. "Perhaps the young fellow is a bit off colour and can't speak up."

Valentine was pale, and her eyes were dilated—rather with an expectation of fear than with fear itself. She turned to him gratefully.

"Please!" she said, and Scudamore hastily went upstairs, followed by the footman. Their footsteps died away and there was a moment's dead silence. Mrs. Carryl, her small face white and terrified, stole up to Valentine as the latter stood with one hand resting on the balusters.

"Oh, Valentine!" she whispered, "oh, Valentine, I hope there is nothing the matter!"

Valentine turned upon her suddenly, her face quivering.

"No!" she cried, in a voice vibrating with excitement, but low as Mrs. Carryl's had been. "No! Why should there be anything the matter? Hark!" she caught Mrs. Carryl's arm tightly as she spoke, dropping her voice to a breathless whisper. "Hark! they are knocking!"

Muffled by distance, but still audible, there came to them the sound of a series of loud raps struck upon a door; then a pause and then Scudamore's voice: "Cary, Cary! My good fellow, what's wrong? Cary!" Another pause, and then more and louder raps.

As if unable longer to bear the suspense, Valentine moved suddenly and went upstairs, followed by Mrs. Carryl.

The little woman only knew that she was afraid to go, and more afraid to stay alone. They passed up two flights of stairs, the knocking and the calls of "Cary, Cary!" "Mr. Geoffrey, sir!" growing more distinct and more alarmed, and then they came to the landing on which was Geoffrey's room. For the moment the noise had been succeeded by a dead silence, and the two women saw Scudamore bending down, his ear to the

key-hole, and his hand held up to enforce quiet on the two men-servants who stood behind him.

Then Scudamore became aware of Valentine's vicinity, and raising himself, came towards her, his florid face pale and disturbed.

"I'm afraid there is something wrong," he said. "We had better force the door, I think. Go downstairs, my dear Miss Clinton, and I will come to you directly. The poor boy has fainted, no doubt."

He tried to lead her to the stairs, but Valentine shook her head. Her face was ashen, and the dread with which her eyes had been full was now an agonised strain of anticipation.

"I can't," she said hoarsely. "Break open the door at once."

He looked at her doubtfully, and then, as if the circumstances were too pressing to allow of longer delay, he went back to the door before which the two men were standing now with faces whiter than his own. There was a hurried consultation, of which no words reached the two women as they stood—Valentine erect, her hands clasped tightly, her eyes never moving from that door; Mrs. Carryl, a shuddering figure, awed into silence broken only by an hysterical sob or two. Some tools were produced, and Scudamore knelt down in front of the door. There were some skillful strokes with a hammer, each one of which sent a thrill through each member of the breathless group around, and then Scudamore rose. The door was ajar. He said something to one of the men, and the latter followed him into the room. There was a moment's pause, breathless, awful, and Scudamore came out, and came to Valentine, his face shocked and horrified beyond description.

"Go downstairs, Miss Clinton," he said. "Go downstairs. This is no business for you."

"Tell me!" came from Valentine's white lips, and her eyes seemed to draw an answer from the man in spite of himself.

"The poor boy's gone!" he said. "He must have been dead for hours."

CHAPTER XVII.

AN UNIMPORTANT WITNESS.

It was a bare, businesslike-looking room, with a long table in the middle of it. And grouped about the table were six people—Valentine, Scudamore, Mrs. Carryl, Mark Dorrisant, and, in the background, Valentine's two men-servants.

The room was that attached to the mortuary in which what had been Geoffrey Cary was lying. Those six people were there summoned by the coroner, and they were waiting now for the return of the coroner and the jury from their first duty—the viewing of the body.

On the right of the table was Valentine. Her face was worn and exhausted with emotion; but set into firm, proud lines of self-control, which left alive only her eyes, slightly dilated as if with horror. Next her was Mrs. Carryl, trembling, sobbing hysterically, and utterly impervious to the rough reassurance of Scudamore, who sat on her other side, nervous, pale, and subdued, throwing an occasional glance at Mark Dorrisant. And a glance at Mark Dorrisant was calculated to subdue the most careless. He sat motionless, his elbow on the table, his forehead on his hand, which was clenched until the muscles stood out like cords, and even the knuckles were whitened. Only an outline of his face could be seen, but that outline was so haggard that he might have sat for a statue of speechless woe.

They waited in unbroken silence until the sound of returning footsteps preceded the appearance of the coroner, the jury, and the doctor. There was a short pause while the coroner adjusted the notes before him and cleared his throat. He was a man with a bland manner and a not particularly intelligent face.

"The first evidence to be taken," he began, "is, necessarily, that upon the point of identification. Mr. Dorrisant—Mr. Mark Dorrisant, is, I believe, the witness on this matter?" He glanced at the motionless figure as he spoke, and there was another moment's pause. Then Mark Dorrisant lifted his head slowly, showing a face so sorrow-stricken that even the coroner's official blandness softened into something like sympathy.

"My name is Mark Dorrisant," he said quietly.

"You reside at 101, Bruton Street?"

"Yes."

"You have no occupation, I believe?"

"No. I returned to England from America in April last to establish my ward in London." His voice did not falter, but there was something about its steadiness more eloquent than a sob. Valentine's lips trembled, and Scudamore glanced hastily up at his friend, and then fixed his eyes once more on the table. Mrs. Carryl was crying now helplessly and continuously.

"You are prepared to identify the deceased as Geoffrey Cary, of 101, Bruton Street?"

"I am. He was my ward."

"You were the last person, I understand, to see the deceased alive. When was that, and under what circumstances?"

"He and I dined on the first of February, the day before he died, with Mr. Arthur Everett, of Hyde Park Gardens. We left his house at about a quarter past twelve, and I proposed that we should go together to our club. My ward complained of headache and decided to walk home. I walked with him to the top of Bruton Street before carrying out my own intention of walking to the 'Strangers,' and—that was the last time."

The feeble sobs which had shaken Mrs. Carryl's little figure hitherto with unbroken regularity, stopped suddenly, the trembling little figure became so still that it seemed as though her very breath was caught and held. Nobody noticed her. All eyes were concentrated on Dorrisant in the dignity of his great grief. At last one jurymen, who had apparently been surprised into emotion and resented the circumstance, said abruptly:

"It's a good walk from Hyde Park Gardens to the 'Strangers'."

Mark Dorrisant turned his eyes patiently upon the speaker. "I am a good walker," he said, "and I am fond of walking at night."

His manner was so simple and dignified that the half-suspicious comment of the jurymen seemed almost an insult; the tide of popular sympathy set strongly towards Dorrisant, and the coroner hastened to say:

"Quite so! You left this unfortunate young gentleman at the top of Bruton Street. You cannot be sure that he went straight home?"

"Unfortunately not," returned Mark Dorrisant. "I was very late in going home myself—it was three o'clock in the morning when I got in—and when I went to my room my ward's door was shut."

There was a choking gasp from the little figure between Valentine and Scudamore, and the hands which held her handkerchief began to shake like leaves. The gasp was very low, however. Only Valentine heard it, and she put her arm gently round Mrs. Carryl.

"Quite so," repeated the coroner. "You say that he complained of headache. Did he seem, otherwise, in his usual health and spirits?"

"He had been in excellent spirits all the evening," answered Mark Dorrisant in a low tone. "Mr. Everett, our host, and another gentleman who dined with us, are here, I see." He glanced as he spoke towards two men who had recently come in. "They will tell you."

"Ah!" said the coroner, glancing in the direction indicated. "Exactly. Thank you, Mr. Dorrisant; for the present that will do. Mr. Robert Scudamore, I believe, was the first to enter the room of the deceased?"

Mr. Robert Scudamore was then called upon to give a detailed account of the part he had played in the affair, of the general appearance of Geoffrey's bedroom when entered, and of Geoffrey himself—"the deceased," as that bright, happy vitality had now become. Scudamore's evidence being concluded, the coroner turned to the doctor.

"Perhaps you will give us your opinion now," he said, "as to the cause of death."

The doctor gave his opinion in a few brief sentences. Deprived of technicalities, it amounted to a statement that the deceased had been killed by a powerful and somewhat rare poison.

To no one present did the statement come absolutely as a surprise; and yet hardly any one heard it absolutely unmoved. Of those immediately concerned, Valentine's face became like a white mask in her effort at self-control. A stifled groan broke from Dorrisant, and Scudamore clutched at the table before him. Only Mrs. Carryl seemed to be utterly unmoved. Her face was still hidden, but she was not sobbing now, only trembling very much. The doctor's words were succeeded by an instant's dead silence, and then the coroner continued:

"You were called to the deceased at two o'clock on the afternoon of the second of February. You found him already dead?"

"I found him already dead," assented the doctor. "He had been dead, I should say, some twelve hours."

"That being the case, can you give us any idea as to when the poison was probably taken?"

"I believe that the quantity taken, as far as I have been able to estimate it, would take fatal effect in from one to two hours from the time it was swallowed. Consequently, I infer that in this case it was taken between twelve and one o'clock at night."

"Between twelve and one o'clock at night," repeated the coroner. "Thank you." Then as the doctor reseated himself, he continued, addressing the jury: "Gentlemen, everything that can be vouched for and sworn to in connection with the case, is now before you. The post-mortem examination finds the deceased to have died, as you have heard, of poison. By whose hand that poison was administered, whether by the unfortunate young man's own hand or by some other, has yet to be discovered. I shall now proceed to examine witnesses as to the circumstances and state of mind of the deceased, and I beg you to give your earnest attention to the evidence from which you will draw your own conclusions."

He had spoken very solemnly, and a hush of awe seemed to fall upon the room.

"Miss Clinton," said the coroner, breaking the silence gravely. "Miss Clinton." He turned to her courteously as he spoke. Valentine was waiting with glowing eyes and the same set, colourless face for his question. "Your name is Valentine Clinton?"

"Yes."

"You reside at 101, Bruton Street?"

"Yes."

"The deceased was no relation to you, I believe?"

"He is my stepfather's ward. We are not related."

"When did you last see the deceased?"

"On the morning of the first of February. We had a long talk about his prospects."

Valentine's voice was clear and distinct, her answers prompt and ready.

"What were his prospects?"

"He was to come of age on the twelfth of February. He was to come into a large fortune. He—he was very anxious to use it well, and we had a long talk."

Her voice faltered a little, and she stopped.

"He was in the habit of talking confidentially with you, then? You were good friends?"

"We were; he was like my brother."

"Now, Miss Clinton, please think carefully before you answer this question. Did the deceased ever, either on the morning of the first of February or on any previous occasion, say anything to you that might suggest any secret trouble—money trouble, love trouble, or what not?"

"Never," returned Valentine unhesitatingly. "He was perfectly happy, perfectly contented that morning. He was looking forward to his life with all his heart."

"Ah!" said the coroner. "And you parted that morning under what circumstances, Miss Clinton?"

"I was going out; I said good-bye to him in the morning-room, and went away. I heard him go out with my stepfather that evening, but I never saw him again."

"You cannot tell us, then, how he spent the day?"

"No."

"At what time did you go to bed that night?"

"It was about half-past eleven o'clock. I had been to a party, from which I came home early."

"Was the deceased at home when you went to bed?"

"No. He was not in the smoking-room—the only room left open—and as I and my friend, Mrs. Carryl, went upstairs we noticed that his bedroom door was open."

"Did you hear him come in subsequently?"

"No. His room and that of my stepfather are on the floor below mine. I very seldom hear them come upstairs. And my room is nearer to theirs than any other bedroom in the house. The servants could not possibly have heard, I am afraid."

She glanced round at the two footmen as she spoke, and the superior answered her eagerly.

"No, miss," he said. "The question has been put again and again in the servants' hall, and none of us heard nothing."

"Thank you, Miss Clinton. I need not trouble you any further, I think, unless any of these gentlemen have any questions to ask you."

"I should like to know," said a jurymen, "how it was nobody thought it odd that the young gentleman didn't show any sign of life all the morning?"

"We forgot him," said Valentine in a low voice. "I—we were all——"

"My stepdaughter became engaged that morning to Mr. Scudamore," interposed Mark Dorrisant.

The jurymen apologised somewhat hastily.

It becoming obvious at this stage in the proceedings that Mr. Everett and his friend were most anxious to deliver their testimony as to the good spirits of the deceased on the

evening before his death, the coroner proceeded to take it; and turning from them to Mark Dorrisant, he went on to question the latter closely as to his late ward's habits, and characteristics generally.

"It is always possible," said Mark Dorrisant at last, his voice shaking slightly for the first time, "it is always possible that my boy may have had secrets from me—troubles of which I know nothing. It is terribly painful to me to contemplate such a possibility, but I begin to understand that it must indeed be so."

"Then you can give us no clue as to any personal enemy of the deceased? You can tell us nothing more in any way bearing on this very mysterious event?"

"Nothing."

There was a moment's pause, and it was broken suddenly by Valentine. With her face flushing and paling by turns as if under the influence of irrepressible excitement, she said hurriedly:

"My stepfather forgets. There is something which I am sure should be considered. This is not the first time—I mean it is not the first time somebody has tried to murder Geoffrey. Last summer in the country he was shot."

There was a movement of immense excitement among the jury. The coroner stilling it, repeated gravely:

"He was shot. By whom, if you please, and under what circumstances?"

"It was never proved. It was in the dark. He was staying with me in Hertfordshire—he and my stepfather—and he was found one night in the park shot—nearly dead. The person who was suspected did not do it."

With a movement at once compassionate and dignified, Mark Dorrisant leant slightly forward, and the coroner turned to him instantly.

"I am afraid there is no clue here," he said in a low voice, as though anxious to spare Valentine. "The person who was suspected"—he glanced at Valentine—"is in London, I believe, but I am, morally speaking, certain that he and my boy had never met since—the other affair. The motives imputed to him then were merely transitory. He had quarrelled with my boy, and he was a passionate, hot-headed fellow."

"His name, if you please?"

"Mr. Kenneth Gaunt."

A police inspector who had been sitting next the doctor making a brief note now and then, wrote down the name rapidly, and held his pencil suspended with evident

eagerness as the coroner asked his next question.

"His address?"

"I do not know it."

"Miss Clinton?"

"I do not know it."

Valentine's voice was cold as ice. She had listened to her stepfather's words with an indescribable expression on her face and her very lips whitening.

"Was Mr. Kenneth Gaunt a fellow-guest with you and the deceased under Miss Clinton's roof?"

"No. Mr. Gaunt was my stepdaughter's agent."

"Were he and the deceased intimate?"

"They only met once—at a dinner-party given by my stepdaughter. Mr. Gaunt grossly insulted my boy. There was a painful scene, in fact. The next day my stepdaughter, who was naturally much annoyed, gave Mr. Gaunt to understand that she should no longer require his services. The young man lost his temper and made use of threatening expressions with regard to my ward, and on that same evening my boy was found, as you have heard, shot in the left side, with Mr. Gaunt's gun lying near him. The case came before the magistrates, of course; but my ward recovered, the evidence was purely circumstantial, and the case was dismissed."

The police inspector now leant across and spoke to the coroner in a low voice.

"Ab, yes," assented the coroner. Then, turning again to Mark Dorrisant, he continued: "You say you know this gentleman to be in London. Will you kindly tell us how you know it?"

Dorrisant hesitated for an instant.

"My stepdaughter chanced to meet him in Regent Street on the first of February," he said with evident reluctance.

The coroner turned to Valentine. What determined the form of his question he could not have said.

"I am afraid we must ask you to give us an account of the interview," he said.

With no movement of her still, proud face, looking straight before her and not at her questioner, Valentine answered instantly:

"I was going from a shop to my carriage. Mr. Gaunt came down the street. We shook hands. I asked him what he was doing. He told me that he could get nothing to do. I gathered that he was in London in search of employment."

Her words followed those of her stepfather into the inspector's note-book, and then the latter said to the coroner in a low

voice: "I should like a description of the gentleman, if you please, sir."

On a word from the coroner an accurate and telling description of Kenneth Gaunt was supplied by Mark Dorrisant.

A short pause ensued, during which the coroner conferred in low tones with the police inspector, and the jury talked in murmurs among themselves. Then the coroner drew himself up once more, and was opening his lips to deliver his final address to the jury, when his eye suddenly fell upon Mrs. Carryl. He glanced hurriedly at his notes. She figured there as a witness of the very slightest importance. Still, there she was. She had been called upon to appear at the inquest, and as a matter of form a question or two must be put to her. Therefore, instead of beginning his charge to the jury, he said:

"There is still one witness, gentlemen, whose evidence has not yet been taken. Mrs. Carryl!"

Mrs. Carryl was sitting with her face bent down, her nervous hands working tremulously at a fold of her gown. She had ceased to shed tears some time since, and had remained almost continually in that attitude, glancing up now and then at one speaker or another, and showing a dazed, tremulous little face. But as the coroner spoke her name, she started violently, and lifted her face suddenly. It was bewildered and terrified beyond expression.

"I—I——" she began almost wildly.

The coroner interposed reassuringly.

"Don't distress yourself, my dear madam, I beg. We have heard that you took luncheon with Mr. Dorrisant and the deceased on the first of February. Can you corroborate Mr. Dorrisant's assertion that the young gentleman was in good health and spirits on that occasion?"

"Yes."

The monosyllable was the merest frightened whisper.

"You came home with Miss Clinton at about half-past eleven o'clock at night, and the deceased was not then at home?"

"No."

"Then you never saw the deceased again after he left the dining-room after lunch?"

A choking, struggling sob broke from Mrs. Carryl, and Valentine laid her hand gently on her arm. The coroner repeated his question soothingly. There was a kind of struggle as it seemed for breath, and then a faint monosyllable, uttered, it appeared, almost involuntarily:

"No."

"And you did not hear him come home at night?"

"No."

The next instant Mrs. Carryl had collapsed helplessly on to Valentine's shoulder as the latter rose hurriedly and put an arm round her.

"Oh, Valentine!" she sobbed, "oh, Valentine, take me away! Take me away! It's so dreadful! Oh, poor Mr. Cary! Poor, poor Mr. Cary!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

VALENTINE ASKS FOR HELP.

"MR. SCUDAMORE is in the drawing-room, if you please, miss."

It was nine o'clock in the evening, and over the house there lay that curious hush which inevitably follows a crisis. Mrs. Carryl's agitation had ended in a series of hysterical attacks of far greater severity than those which had kept her in her room until the morning of the inquest. Valentine had only left her when, on her becoming comparatively quiet, she had gone down to dinner with her stepfather.

She paused for an instant as the footman spoke, but the thought of Scudamore's presence did not seem to displease her. A certain consideration and capability about him, in the terrible hour of the discovery of Geoffrey's death, had created in her a reliance on him which the two following days had only served to strengthen. There was a distinct eagerness in her eyes as she opened the drawing-room door.

Scudamore's face was still very subdued. His voice was subdued, too, as he met Valentine with a clumsy but genuinely anxious enquiry as to her health. He did not touch her. Perhaps one source of her growing confidence in him lay in the fact that his sympathy had taken no lover-like form. She answered him gently enough, and coming up to the fireplace let herself sink into a chair. Scudamore followed her, and stood before the fire, looking down at her slight figure with something that was almost wistfulness on his coarse face.

"Dorrisant has told you of the verdict?" he said somewhat abruptly.

Valentine's eyes were fixed on the fire as she answered, and they glittered in strange contrast to her weary face.

"Yes! 'Poison, by whom administered there is no evidence to show!'"

Her voice was curious; there was in it a suppressed ring of almost bitter excitement.

"And—the rider?" The words came from Scudamore hesitatingly.

Valentine lifted her face to him, and answered vehemently.

"Yes; the rider!" she said. "Mr. Scudamore, there is no one else I can speak to. My stepfather—how can I talk to him about what is breaking his heart? And a woman can do so little in these things! I must make some man understand how necessary, how absolutely necessary it is that the man who has done this horrible thing should be found. Mr. Gaunt will be arrested, I suppose?"

"Yes," said Scudamore.

He spoke with great gentleness, and his eyes were fixed upon her with that incongruous wistfulness deepened in them.

"Yes," said Valentine, clasping her hands fiercely as though to retain her self command. "He will be arrested, and he will be questioned and insulted, and then he will be released, as he was before; released with everything made worse for him by the mere suspicion, though there is not a shadow of evidence against him! Oh, it is too horrible that an innocent man should suffer all his life for a villain!"

She stopped, trembling from head to foot. The strain of the past two days was taking its revenge. Her self-control was slipping from her, and she hardly knew that it had gone.

"Dorrisant believes——" began Scudamore. His voice was low and dogged.

"I know," cried Valentine, rising impetuously from her seat and facing him. "I know; that is why I cannot talk to him. Everybody at Templecombe almost believes the same thing—that it was he who shot Geoff. Oh, don't you see, that is why the man who has done it now must be found? In justice to an innocent man he must! Nobody who knows the circumstances can imagine for one moment that Mr. Gaunt is the man who has poisoned him. Who it can possibly be I cannot think—I cannot guess. I have thought and thought over every word Geoff ever said to me, and I cannot find the faintest clue. There must be some one of whom we know nothing—some enemy of his father's, perhaps! But when the man who poisoned him is found, the man who shot him will be found too! Oh, I know it—I know it! Everything must be done, no stone must be left unturned, to find him. You will see to it—oh, you will see to it, won't you? Money will do a great deal. Spend what you

like of mine, only find the man! It is our duty, don't you see? All the injustice comes from us. Justice must come from us, too!"

There is a supreme moment of ecstatic self-abandonment, when self-consciousness is not, and self-deception touches its apotheosis. And this moment had come to Valentine. As she stood there, with her head thrown back, she was beautiful as she had never been in all her life before; and as he looked at her, a dull red flush crept over the forehead of the man who watched her, the wistfulness died out of his eyes, and his mouth set itself into dogged lines of determination.

As if the words were drawn from him against his will, he said sullenly:

"I'll do my best, of course."

Even as he spoke Valentine shivered, trembled helplessly for a moment, and burst into wild sobs and tears.

"Oh, Geoff!" she cried brokenly, "oh, my dear Geoff—my poor Geoff!"

And before Scudamore, in his amazement, could speak to her or touch her, she had hurried across the room and was gone.

CHAPTER XIX. "IT MEANS NOTHING."

ON the following day Geoffrey Cary was buried, and the inevitable sensationalism attendant on a sudden and mysterious tragedy sank into abeyance before the more solemn feelings which rose and laid their touch upon the lightest of those even remotely concerned.

Valentine was seen very little during that day; and such talk as passed between her, her stepfather, and Scudamore was subdued into harmony with the atmosphere about them. Not once did any of the three touch on the terrible spectre of dread and uncertainty that threw a ghastly shadow on the solemnity of the day.

One day followed another, and the household fell once more into its ordinary routine, with that terrible closing up round the gap which is so inevitable, and still that spectre darkened all the house. The murderer of Geoffrey Cary, if murdered he had been, was still far to seek. Kenneth Gaunt was arrested, examined, and released, there being no possible ground for his detention. And the police, this clue having broken in their hands, were, and practically owned themselves to be, completely at a loss. Day after day Valentine would come to Scudamore with the same question: "Have they found out anything?" To

receive always the same answer, given with the same sullenness: "Not yet." Valentine looked very thin and white in her black dresses, but her face was always quiet and composed. To Dorrisant, as he went about wrapped in a gloom that nothing seemed to lighten, she was tenderness itself. To Scudamore she was always gentle and kind, though she was never quite at ease with him after one evening when he took her suddenly into his arms and kissed her passionately. He released her almost instantly, apologising gruffly and awkwardly, and she neither resisted nor remonstrated, only she turned very cold and white.

Her time, as the days drifted on, was mainly occupied with Mrs. Carryl. The agitation of the inquest, coming on the horror of the preceding days, seemed to have shattered the little woman completely. For the first two days the doctor talked about brain fever. Mrs. Carryl appeared to grow no worse, however. She would lie silent for an hour at a time; then, if addressed, she would burst into hysterical sobs and tears, and cry herself into absolute exhaustion. But by degrees her fits of crying grew less violent. She was allowed to get up, and then Valentine was absolutely startled at the change which little more than a week had made in her. Always fragile, there seemed to be now literally nothing of her; and her eyes had a frightened, horrified look in them pitiful to see. It was to her jarred and quivering nerves that Valentine attributed the absolute dread of meeting Dorrisant which she tried feebly to conceal. To face grief, however quiet, is an ordeal even to a brave nature.

The passage of the days which spares no grief brought in due course the twelfth of February; the day which should have brought Geoffrey's majority. Neither Valentine nor her stepfather alluded to the date, but after lunch was over Valentine went up to her stepfather as he stood before the fire, looking absently down into it, and slipped her arm through his.

"What are you going to do this afternoon, dear?" she said softly.

He started, and looked at her with a little smile before he answered.

"I shall go for a walk, Queen Val. A good long walk."

Valentine pressed her cheek against his shoulder for a moment in mute sympathy. Then she turned and went gently out of the room.

She went upstairs, her face very tender

and pathetic, thinking evidently of the dead boy. But before she reached her own room the softness had died out of her face, merged in an almost fierce determination.

"Why don't they find him?" she said, speaking just below her breath, as though the intensity of her feeling was not to be denied expression. "Why don't they find him? They must and shall."

She stood for an instant, her hands pressed together, her face set in a passion of longing, which seemed almost a demand. Then she moved; her features settled into their usual expression, and she went down to Mrs. Carryl.

Valentine's representation that no one need see her there unless she wished it, had brought Mrs. Carryl into the morning-room. She had been lying back in a large arm-chair there all the morning, a little, weak figure. She started violently as Valentine opened the door, and the frightened eyes she turned towards it, and the trembling, parted lips, were pitiful to see. Valentine smiled at her, and coming across the room with a gentle, reassuring word, stood looking down with eyes of affectionate concern into the weak face upturned to her.

"Don't you feel any better this afternoon, Marion?" she said gently. She touched the little woman's forehead with a caressing gesture, and tried not to acknowledge to herself that Mrs. Carryl looked rather worse than better. "I wish I could do you good," she said.

Mrs. Carryl moved restlessly, and taking a fold of Valentine's dress into her hand, began to fold it nervously. Her lips quivered ominously. Valentine knelt suddenly down by the chair and took the two fluttering hands into her own strong ones.

"Marion," she said gently, "don't think me hard and unsympathetic, dear; but don't you think the time has come when you should try to get better? I know, of course," she went on very quickly and sweetly, "I know quite well how ill you feel; but if you tried to control your thoughts and your feelings a little, you would get stronger so much sooner, I am sure. You understand, don't you, dear?"

Mrs. Carryl bowed her head; she was clinging tightly to Valentine's hands; her lips were twitching helplessly, and there was a look in her eyes as of a terrified little animal that longs to speak and cannot.

"There is my stepfather," Valentine went on, with a little break in her voice.

"If you could see how—oh, Marion, Marion, don't!"

Mrs. Carryl had broken suddenly into such sobs as had not shaken her for two or three days now; she was clinging convulsively to Valentine, and her hands were cold and shaking.

"Oh, Valentine," she cried, "oh, Valentine, don't be angry with me! It isn't that I'm ill. I'm so miserable, I'm so miserable. I don't know what to do. I can't understand, and I can't think, and it keeps coming back to me. Oh, what shall I do? What shall I do?"

There was a ring in her voice of genuine, unendurable misery, which was very different from the self-created distress of morbid imagination, and a cold shock of vague dread passed through Valentine—why, she could not have told.

"Hush, Marion, hush!" she repeated instinctively. "Tell me what you mean!"

"I can't!" cried Mrs. Carryl wildly. "It's so dreadful of me to know it! You would hate me so if I said it. I know he must have some good reason, of course, and he never thought any one else knew. Oh, why did I come downstairs? Why can't I forget all about it? Of course, if it was of any consequence he would have said, only—only I can't get it out of my head. I feel as if I were doing something wicked."

"What do you mean, Marion? Of whom are you talking?"

Valentine's face had grown white to the very lips, with hope which in its intensity was almost fear. Her eyes were glittering, as though they saw, with an overwhelming sense of its nearness, the clue towards which she was straining. She was clutching Mrs. Carryl now almost fiercely, and her voice was low and peremptory.

"I was so startled," broke out Mrs. Carryl, wringing her hands feebly, "so dreadfully startled and confused. It came so suddenly. It was a dreadful thing to tell a lie, I know, but what could I do? I couldn't say he hadn't told quite the truth. He is so good and kind, and he must have had such a good reason! What could I do? Oh, what could I do?"

"Tell me what you mean, Marion!"

The words came from Valentine a low, hoarse command. With the intense expectancy of her face there was mingled now a shadowy, undefined dread.

"It was about half an hour after we went to bed," said Mrs. Carryl, burying her face in her hands, and giving up all reserve at

once in a flood of tears. "I—I wasn't very sleepy, and I did so want to finish that third volume; it—it was so lovely, you know. I had left it in the drawing-room, and I knew just where it was, and I thought I would run down and fetch it. I didn't take a light, there was the gas on the landing, you know, and I knew I could find the book in the dark. And just as I was coming out of the room with it, I heard a latchkey in the front door, and I waited, because I thought Mr. Dorrisant or Mr. Cary might see me. I had my dressing-gown on. I was only just inside the door, and I heard them both come in. Mr. Dorrisant must have noticed your fan—you left it downstairs, you know—for he said in a rather low voice, 'The party must have been dull, Geoff! They have come in, you see!' Mr. Cary laughed, and said, 'How sleepy of Val to go off to bed!' And then they both went to the smoking-room. I heard them."

"You heard——" Valentine was kneeling back on the floor now, her hands clenched together in her lap, her brows contracted. "But when was all this, Marion?" she said abruptly.

"On the night of the first of February. The night before—the night before Mr. Cary died," sobbed Mrs. Carryl.

A long, sighing breath, in which there was a sound of disappointment, parted Valentine's lips, and then she leant forward and put her hand on Mrs. Carryl's arm.

"Marion," she said, speaking very slowly, "you have fretted and worried yourself until you are imagining things. You must have dreamed what you say—since. Don't you see that it isn't possible that it really happened? Mr. Dorrisant did not come home with Mr. Cary that night. He went to the club. You heard him say so."

"I know," was the tearful, muffled answer. "That is what startled me so. Because I saw him, Valentine. I saw him. I couldn't believe my ears when he said that at the inquest. Everything went round and round. Oh, I wish I hadn't seen him! It seems so horrid and spying! But I did."

There was a silence. Mrs. Carryl's hysterics seemed to have passed away in the relief afforded her by speech, and she was crying quietly. Valentine sat on the floor, apparently too absolutely unconscious of her surroundings to think of moving, now and then lifting her hand to her head

as though she were in pain or dazed. A knock came at the door, and she rose to her feet, staggering a little as she did so, and saying mechanically: "It isn't possible, Marion," as though she was unaware that time had passed since she spoke last—time in which Mrs. Carryl, quite worn out, had absolutely cried herself to sleep.

The footman had come to tell her that Scudamore was in the drawing-room, and with a strange, stunned look on her face, she went downstairs.

"I came——" began Scudamore as she came up to him, and then he stopped short, staring at her. "Is there anything the matter?" he said clumsily. "I am afraid you're ill."

Valentine shook her head almost vacantly.

"I am quite well, thank you," she said in a dull, toneless voice. "There's nothing——" She stopped abruptly, and then she moved on, mechanically apparently, to the window, Scudamore following her with an alarmed wonder in his face. "I think I will tell you," she said after a moment. "It isn't possible—it can't be possible, of course. You are his friend, and you will help me say so." She paused a moment, and then said in the same almost stupid tone: "Mrs. Carryl declares that my stepfather came home with Geoffrey that night. She says that she came down to the drawing-room for a book, and heard them come in—heard my stepfather speak and Geoffrey answer him."

She was looking straight out of the window, and she did not see the face of the man behind her. Over Robert Scudamore's features there flashed a sudden expression of horror-struck realisation—of ghastly suspicion suddenly become still more ghastly conviction. He tried to speak, but no words came from his lips, which had grown hot and dry. With a sudden, impulsive movement Valentine turned and faced him.

"Why don't you speak?" she demanded fiercely. "She dreamed it, of course, or if she did not dream it, it means nothing! Why don't you say so?"

But before he could say so—before he could bring his white lips to the utterance of a single word, she had fallen like a stone at his feet.

CHAPTER XX. FACE TO FACE.

THE room was very still. There was no sound or movement in it of any kind, except the slow crackling of the fire, and

the quick, heavy breathing of one of the two men who faced each other on either side of the table.

It was about eleven o'clock at night two days later, and Scudamore and Dorrisant were alone together in the smoking-room at Bruton Street.

Dorrisant it was, certainly. The outline of his handsome features was unchanged; but except by that outline no one—not any member of the household—not Valentine herself, could have recognised him, he had in the past hour so utterly and completely changed. It was as if a finely-moulded mask had been taken from his face; a mask that had contained all the admirable traits of the face that every one had found admirable, and had left only the bare foundation on which that mask had rested.

In the foundation thus left there was the unmistakeable stamp of genuineness. The bitter sneer on his mouth was genuine; the hate that gleamed in his eyes was genuine; and the unscrupulously calculating expression of the whole face—all were genuine. It was true, beyond the possibility of doubt, that here and now was presented the real man—the true Mark Dorrisant, and none other.

The two pairs of fierce eyes held each other in the stillness as though it were a supreme moment of defiance. At last one of the two men moved. It was Dorrisant; and he carried the cigarette he held mechanically to his lips. It had gone out; and he flung it savagely into the grate, leaned back in his chair, and crossed his arms in an attitude of intense thought. His movement broke up the strain of the previous position, and Scudamore, almost as if released, moved also. Under his clenched hand as it lay on the table was a very small bottle, half empty; he took it up, instinctively, it seemed, and put it in his breast-pocket. Drops of perspiration were standing on his forehead; he was looking indefinitely coarser and rougher than usual, as though with him also, the lowest elements of his personality were exposed to view by the intensity of the moment.

He took out his handkerchief and wiped his forehead; and as he did it, it was the common action of a common man.

"I never was your equal, Dorrisant," he said in a difficult, husky voice. "Not in brains, nor manners, nor nothing! Hang me if I'm your equal in blackguardism either!"

"Ah!" responded Mark Dorrisant curtly.

"These are your facts, then," he went on in a hard, metallic voice, not even looking at the other man, and evidently recapitulating and demanding confirmation as an assistance to his own mental processes. "My ward having died by poison, your thoughts go back to the past, and you find yourself vaguely uneasy and suspicious. You are told that I was seen to enter the house, when I have stated that I did not enter it, and your suspicions increasing, you cast about for a motive. Your mind takes a financial turn, and finding that I inherit young Cary's property under his father's will, it occurs to you as possible that I wanted that property. Pondering upon my financial position before Cary's death, you begin to question the truth of some statements I made to you two months ago as to the source of my income. You telegraph to Australia, ascertain that those statements were false, and thereupon arrive at the conclusion that I have no private income; and having thus established in your own mind the motive you sought, you take the liberty of searching my room and find in a private drawer, of which you are, perhaps, the only living man besides myself who knows the secret, the remains of a bottle of the poison of which young Cary died. That's all!"

"It's enough!" answered Scudamore gruffly. "What's the use of talking about 'establishing in my own mind,' and my 'arriving at conclusions'? I've spoken the truth, and you know it. Mrs. Carryl's statement and this bottle"—he touched his breast-pocket as he spoke—"would do your business safe enough even if you could show your accounts for the last three years. And you can't."

"No," assented Dorrisant, with a low, sardonic laugh, "I can't!"

There was another pause. Scudamore, his eyes fixed on Dorrisant with a kind of fascination in them, wiped his forehead again. Dorrisant sat perfectly motionless. At last he moved, folded his arms on the table, and looked across at the other. His face was hard and businesslike.

"Well," he said callously, "we may as well come to terms, I suppose. That little fool"—he spoke Mrs. Carryl's name with an oath—"can be managed. If I can't persuade her she has dreamt the whole thing, I've wasted nine months' work on her! And I can settle the girl too. It lies between you and me."

"Yes!" was the sullen answer. "It lies between you and me."

"When we met two months ago," went on Dorrisant, with the same hard deliberation, "the stakes were not even. Our cards were level enough. You held that Bettessville business against my knowledge of you as Bob Hamilton, forger and card-sharper. But I had a position to lose"—the thin lips curled into the slightest suggestion of an evil smile—"a recital of that Bettessville business would have destroyed my very valuable character, whereas you had nothing absolutely to lose. Consequently, we made our little bargain."

A curse came from Scudamore, and he moved uneasily on his chair. With his eyes fixed on the other's face, Dorrisant went on:

"Now, this business of mine is a big thing. I saw there was money in it when Cary began to talk of my seeing after the boy. He was a gentleman, and he was also a fool, for I hadn't been in the camp a month, and his will provided that in case of the boy's death before his majority I should step into the property. Of course, I didn't foresee then all the developements, but I foresaw plenty of money until the boy would come of age."

Dorrisant's manner had altered very subtly as he talked. Confidential would be far too strong a word for it, but it was indefinably suggestive of past partnership in dishonourable transactions between him and the man to whom he spoke. As if the suggestion influenced him in spite of himself Scudamore asked sullenly:

"How did you get him to make such a will?"

Dorrisant laughed.

"Get him, my good fellow!" he said. "It wasn't necessary to get him. He was more than willing. I don't think I saw the whole thing until the boy had a narrow squeak in a railway accident!"

"That was just before you left New York last winter?"

Dorrisant nodded.

"And then, I suppose," Scudamore went on, "it occurred to you as an alternative to look up—Templecombe." He made a pause before the last word, as if he had intended to pronounce Valentine's name, and found it impossible.

"Exactly!" was the reply. "I knew the girl could help me to a good position, at any rate. And there might have been a chance of handling her coin too. But she turned out such an independent spitfire, you see!"

"And so," said Scudamore fiercely, "find-

ing you couldn't deal with—her as you dealt with that poor quaking fool of a wife of yours, her mother, you fell back on the other game? I take it that was the meaning of that affair at Templecombe?"

Again Dorrisant nodded, and then with a movement of his hand as though to dispose of that branch of the subject, he said, resuming his businesslike tone:

"We're wandering from the point. What I began to say was this. Although this is a big thing for me—a big thing, I'm willing to admit, in more ways than one," he added significantly—"that other little bargain of ours has equalised the stakes, to a certain extent at least. You've got something to lose too, consequently you needn't open your mouth too wide. What do you want?"

The question came sharp and peremptory, and as he heard it a dark flush mounted to Scudamore's forehead. He leant back in his chair, sticking his legs out in front of him, and said doggedly:

"Suppose I don't want anything?"

Dorrisant looked at him for a moment with a quick flash of his eyes. Then he said very quietly:

"What do you mean?"

"Suppose I mean I've had a sickener?" said Scudamore without moving. "Suppose I mean I want to get straight and go straight; suppose I mean that I don't know what's come to me, but I feel myself the biggest brute and sharper going—except you—and I'm not going to blacken myself any further? Confound it all, that's what I do mean!"

He brought his fist down on the table with a crash as he spoke, leaning a little forward and glaring fiercely at Mark Dorrisant.

A curious kind of shade seemed to fall upon Mark Dorrisant's face; it seemed to grow almost grey with the intense consideration into which it was set. It was so concentrated that no surprise could express itself, but that very concentration implied the sudden appearance of a new factor in his calculations. His cool eyes never stirred from Scudamore's flushed face, as he said in a still, intent tone, with a suggestion of a sneer about it:

"This is a new line for you, Bob. You've taken a good deal of trouble to work this affair up if you don't stand to make anything by it!"

"I do stand to make something by it, then," retorted the other, his rough passion, the passion of desperate and unpalatable

resolution, contrasting strongly and most unfavourably with Dorrisant's self-restraint. "I'm going to show you up! By Heaven, I am!"

He started to his feet as he spoke, raising his hand and shaking it fiercely, as though in the coarse earnest of his determination he were calling on Heaven to hear him even against himself. A deeper shade darkened Mark Dorrisant's face, but he leant calmly back in his chair and crossed his legs.

"I think not," he said. "I think you mean to have my stepdaughter—and her money. And I don't think she would have Bob Hamilton!"

Scudamore turned upon him roughly.

"I know she wouldn't!" he cried. "I know what it means, through and through, I tell you, and I'm going to do it. I don't want her to have me! Lord knows how it's happened, but she's been getting at me ever since she said 'Yes' to me—trusting me and believing I was a decent sort of fellow—until I can't go near her, I can't be in the room with her, without feeling what a low scoundrel I am. Why, man, she couldn't live with me! A fellow can't help his nature, and when she came to know me I should be the death of her, just by being the kind of man I am—yes, if I kept as straight as straight, and she never heard anything about me—she being what she is." His voice shook a little, and he paused; to go on in an instant in thick, uncertain tones: "She doesn't care for me—how should she? And she does care for that fellow Gaunt—you know that, I suppose. When I found out that, I swore I'd keep her, and be hanged to it all! It makes it hard! By Heaven, it makes it hard! But now I know this about young Cary—now I see how black the whole thing is—there, I can't explain it, but I tell you I'm played out. I couldn't stand by and see her going on with you, knowing what I do of you. I've had enough of lies all round. I'm going to tell her!"

"That's very generous of you. I don't quite see why you feel bound to put her into Gaunt's arms, as you will certainly do; but it is very generous of you. You clear his character for him, and you give him your own promised wife. I assure you he will appreciate the gift, and it is certainly a gift worth having."

Dorrisant had spoken very quietly, so quietly that his tone, taken in conjunction with the whiteness of his lips, suggested that his calm was assumed to meet an even desperate crisis.

A fierce oath broke from Scudamore, and taking a blind, furious step forward, he stood glaring down at his adversary, his face inflamed and working, his hands convulsively clenched, his whole figure eloquent of the fierce struggle raging within between his desire and that strange impulse towards right which had come to him so late, and so unexpectedly, and which was drawing him whither he hardly knew. Dorrisant continued in the same still tone :

"When you saw her——"

He paused abruptly, and turned his head sharply towards the door. It opened as he did so, and into the room, in the sudden hush that had fallen, came Valentine. For the last two days she had hardly seen Dorrisant; she had complained of headache and had hardly left her room. Now she came straight across the room without a word, passing between the two men, and stood before her stepfather. She was wearing a soft trailing white gown, and her slender figure looked very graceful and womanly. Her face was pale and earnest, and the mouth was very sweet.

"I have come," she said in a low, clear voice, her frank eyes looking straight into Dorrisant's—"I have come to ask you to explain to me. I will not wrong you any longer by doubting your word without telling you that I must doubt it. I heard that you and Mr. Scudamore were here together, and I have thought and thought until I felt that I must come. Mr. Scudamore has told you what Mrs. Carryl has told me. Is it true? If it is true, what does it mean? I have trusted you. I trust you now."

She paused, and for a moment there was a dead silence. The low voice, the gentle truth and generosity of the words coming upon the hot passions of the two men created an indescribable effect of contrast, as the purity of her material presence contrasted with the figures of the two men, the one cold and still, only the grip of his fingers on his chair betraying him; the other heated, almost convulsed, with the sudden instinctive movement of outward self-control. At last Dorrisant said, slowly and deliberately :

"I am glad that you have come to me, Valentine. I can understand that your confidence must have been terribly shaken, and if I cannot help wishing that you had come to me at once, don't think I blame you. It is no wonder that you were confused and distressed beyond the possibility

of judgement. I, myself, at first was absolutely shocked and horror-struck."

With a swift impetuous movement Valentine fell on her knees beside her stepfather's chair and stretched out her hands to him.

"It isn't true!" she exclaimed, with a low cry of joy and relief. "It isn't true!"

"Poor Mrs. Carryl is a morbidly hysterical woman!" said Dorrisant very gravely. "I can bring you witnesses from the club—if you need them—to prove my presence there. No, it is not true!"

With another cry of joy she bent towards him, and he was just taking her into his arms when an inarticulate roar of fury broke from Scudamore, and he sprang forward and pulled her roughly back. The tumult which had been surging in him during the last few minutes had broken its bonds, and it was carrying him with irresistible impetus towards the right.

"No!" he cried hoarsely. "By Heaven, no! You shan't touch her! Miss Clinton, you want to find the man who killed young Geoffrey Cary! There he is!"

His touch had startled Valentine to her feet, and she stood, as he spoke, between the two men, shrinking a little from Scudamore, her bewildered, almost frightened eyes fixed on his face.

He lifted his passion-shaken hand as he finished and pointed to Dorrisant, and as he did so, with a low cry of repudiation and a shock of disbelief and indignation on her face, she turned instinctively towards her stepfather. She was too quick. She intercepted on Dorrisant's face—the face she had never before seen otherwise than kind and dignified—a look cast upon Scudamore of such deadly malignity, such desperate, infuriated threatening, that she seemed for the moment to be looking at a hideous travesty of the features she knew. Her expression changed pitifully; she staggered back a step and covered her face with her hands with a faint gasp.

Dorrisant had started to his feet, but before he could speak Scudamore went on, glaring past Valentine's white figure right into the deadly-looking face confronting his.

"I'm giving myself away in telling you!" he went on fiercely, and in spite of the rough phrase, in spite of the coarse passion of the man, there was a desperate earnest, a genuine self-abnegation about him which gave him a strange wild touch of dignity. "He'll tell you the truth about me when I've done, unless I tell you

myself. But I don't care. I've had enough of him for this time, and I won't stand by and see you trusting such a villain. I know him through and through, and you don't know one of his thoughts, though he is your stepfather. He's fooled you from first to last. He came to you posing as a rich man—a man who wanted nothing of any one. That was his game. He hadn't a penny in the world of his own; he was living on the boy's money. He'd have had your money if you'd been another sort; he came to see what could be done with you, and found his best game lay in the independent line. He had got the boy's father to make a will in his favour, failing the boy, and before he had been in your house two months he made his first shot at getting the poor chap out of the way."

A cry broke from Valentine. She lifted her face to Dorrisant for an instant, drawn with horror and passionate incredulity, and then dropped it on her hands again.

With a fierce imprecation, as though the sight of her agony inflamed his fury against Dorrisant, Scudamore strode to the latter as his grey lips moved as if to speak, and gripping him by the wrist said savagely:

"You shan't! She shall hear it out first, I swear."

Still with his large, powerful grip on Dorrisant he turned his face to Valentine and went on:

"He's not a man to be beaten, and he managed things cleverly next time, but he reckoned without his hosts—Mrs. Carryl and myself. Mrs. Carryl's right enough, of course. He did come in with the boy that night, and calculating that not a soul could know of it, he gave him his dose in his whisky, or what not. Then he cabbled it down to the club, and proves his alibi by swearing that he walked from Hyde Park Gardens! I know him of old, and when I heard from you what Mrs. Carryl said, I looked round in his room. He's got an old despatch-box that I know of old, too. There's a secret drawer in it, and in that secret drawer I found the bottle from which he settled the boy."

He stopped; but there was no movement of that slender girlish figure, standing now with its face crushed down upon its clenched hands. The breath was coming in long, laboured gasps, which seemed to shake her from head to foot.

Dorrisant's face seemed to have grown

sharp and thin; his lips were nothing but a straight grey line; his eyes were indescribably intent. A cruel gleam came into them now, and he moved as if to speak, glancing down as he did so at Scudamore's hand upon his wrist. But again Scudamore stopped him roughly. It was curious to see how the coarser, inferior nature—mentally speaking—had risen above itself in its fierce struggle towards all it could see of right, and Scudamore was master of the situation.

"No," he said, and the dignity about him struggled into still more definite expression, "I'll tell her myself." He turned to Valentine again, and his voice thickened a little. "I'm part of his lies," he said. "He and I have been in many a little game out West, though I draw the line at cold-blooded murder; and there was one little business I could have split upon that would have made things very awkward for him. He wasn't pleased to meet me when I turned up two months ago; but we squared things. I'd seen you in the Park, and I—well, I thought a lot of you. He told me there was money with you, and we arranged that I should hold my tongue about him, and he should help me to you. He introduced me as a rough sort of gentleman—a good sort. I'm a card-sharper and a gambler by profession, and there isn't a line in my record that would seem to you straight. I was cleaned out, and he lent me the money to cut a dash with—the boy's money, of course. I got on right enough until you said 'yes' to me, but since then—well, you've been too much for me."

His voice broke, and he dropped Dorrisant's wrist abruptly and turned away. There was a heavy, dead silence; then Valentine let her hands fall by her sides, and lifted her face. She turned her dark, horror-filled eyes on Dorrisant with a look in them as though she saw him across an immeasurable gulf; but still she did not speak. Dorrisant met her eyes with his own, hard and calculating, and then there stole over his face, brought there by who can tell what superhuman effort of his iron will, a ghastly shadow of his usual semi-paternal expression. He drew a step nearer to her.

"Is it true?"

The words came from her in a weak, trembling voice, but as she spoke them, Mark Dorrisant stopped short. There was a stern demand in every drawn line of her white face that made her look like

a terrible accusing angel, and meeting that demand the man before her saw that his chance was over. His face settled suddenly into a callous, reckless cynicism.

"Yes," he said brutally.

The white figure swayed for a moment, and Valentine stretched out her hand and caught at the back of a chair.

"My mother—my mother loved you!" she said. "Go!"

He bowed ironically; he was beaten; the game was hopelessly lost. It was a case for instant flight, and in his impotent, baffled rage his cruelty rose and cried savagely for revenge, however mean.

"This will be a pleasant business to explain to the ill-used Gaunt," he said. "It is a pity he does not return your passion." Then he turned savagely to Scudamore. "You may as well come, too, confound you," he said; "you're played out, too."

Scudamore glanced irresolutely at Valentine as she stood, still grasping the back of the chair, gazing straight before her. Her face had changed not at all at Dorrisant's last words; more ghastly it could not become. Then he turned and followed Dorrisant out of the room.

The door closed upon them, and still Valentine did not move. There was an interval of silence, and then the front door banged heavily. Valentine stretched out her hand as though groping her way, passed across the room, across the hall, up the stairs, still in the same stumbling, groping fashion, went into her own room, and shut the door.

CHAPTER XXI. A LIFELONG TRUCE.

THREE days had passed—three days during which a great deal of excitement and conjecture had been rife in Valentine's household; firstly as to the important business which, as had been announced, had summoned Mr. Dorrisant suddenly to America; and secondly, as to whether Miss Clinton was on the verge of a serious illness or was really fretting at the absence of Mr. Scudamore, also called to America.

Valentine was in the morning-room alone. The events of the last few days, and her share in bringing them about, had been instantly, though feebly, realised by Mrs. Carryl, on hearing accidentally of Dorrisant's departure, and her feeble strength had been completely taken away again by the realisation. She was ill again, and in a state verging so nearly on

brain fever that Valentine had got a nurse for her. Therefore Valentine was alone, and she was glad to be so. She had been in the morning-room for nearly an hour, and during that time she had never moved. She had been sitting with her hands clasped together in her lap, her whole figure tense and rigid, her eyes dark and fixed, as though she were bracing herself for an ordeal. The last three days had changed her as only terrible and relentless mental suffering can change a face. There were lines and shadows about her mouth which made it look ten years older; the eyes had a strained, agonised look, as though they were gazing always at something incomprehensible and infinitely terrible; the cheeks were hollow and perfectly colourless.

"A gentleman to see you, if you please, miss."

Her white lips set themselves into a line which made her face strangely heroic, like the face of a woman nerved to meet a supreme moment of pain, as she took the card the footman brought her and rose. She did not look at the card; apparently her visitor was expected, and his name known to her.

"You have shown the gentleman into the dining-room?" she said quietly.

"As you told me, miss."

She went downstairs with the same quiet resolution of movement, opened the dining-room door, and went in. Standing by the table, his face pale and almost defiant, was Kenneth Gaunt.

Valentine made no attempt to shake hands. With the same rigid self-control she bowed, and sitting down, made a movement that he should do the same. But Kenneth chose to disregard the tacit invitation, and remained standing stiffly.

"Your note was urgent, Miss Clinton," he began, arming himself, as it seemed, with a certain resentment of tone, "therefore I have come. You are very good to take an interest in me, but as I told you, nothing can be done, and interviews, I imagine, are painful to us both." He paused a moment, and glanced at her black frock and white face. "May I say—to you," he said hesitatingly, and flushing a little, "how shocked and sorry I am?"

Her hand clenched itself tightly as it lay in her lap, and ignoring the latter part of his speech, she said in a cold, measured voice:

"My note was urgent because I have something—urgent—to say to you. Will

you, please, sit down? I have a good deal to say, and I cannot say it with you standing. It is not—easy.”

Her breath caught sharply, and she stopped. Kenneth looked at her quickly, and a curious change, a kind of shock, passed over his face. He sat down near her without a word.

And then she told him—told him coldly and deliberately, holding herself in a grip of steel, the intensity of which was the measure of what she controlled—how and by whose hand Geoffrey Cary had come to his death. She told him the whole story, simply and baldly, stating the bare facts, neither extenuating nor explaining, choosing her words and phrases with a certain precision, as though she had gone over the scene in her own thoughts many times.

“These are all the facts,” she said finally. “It was my duty—it was just,” her voice rang for the first time as she said the word—“that you should know them. I do not know, I have not wished to think, what you will think it right to do. You must be set right with the world, of course. I have waited three days before telling you, to give him time. Perhaps you will blame me for that. Perhaps it is a wrong to Geoffrey as well. I could not help it. My mother loved him, and I——”

Her voice died away, and she sat still, as though instinctively clinging to her self-control, her lips trembling a little.

Kenneth Gaunt moved abruptly and lifted his head. He had listened in perfect silence, his face screened by his hand, and he lifted it now, shocked and awe-stricken, but not surprised. He had apparently intended to speak, but the words seemed to fail him. He glanced at the mute anguish of her face, and there was a silence. At last he said in a low, shaken voice:

“I—I am very sorry.”

The words sounded so helpless and so inadequate that he stopped again. Then he went on in a blundering, confused kind of way, gaining firmness and force as he spoke:

“As for doing anything, don’t think for a moment that I would. It—it’s a terrible business, but nothing will make it better. Nothing will undo what’s done! I can do without setting myself right with the world. I’ve been a fool and taken things the wrong way, but—I shall begin again. The truth is known to you and to me, and to—to

two others. It need never be known to any one else.”

The set lines of Valentine’s face quivered and broke up. She turned it to him all stirred and glowing with emotion, and clasped her hands passionately together.

“Oh,” she cried, “that can’t be! I must not let you! Not even for my mother’s sake.”

Kenneth Gaunt rose suddenly and came and stood beside her. His face, too, was moved and working. The crust of proud reserve in which he had wrapped himself was broken through, and the very man, impulsive and passionate, had come to the surface.

“No, not for your mother’s sake,” he said rapidly, in a low, burning voice. “For yours! Let me do this for you, and I shall look the world in the face and laugh—yes, if it shouted ‘murderer’ after me half over England. I was a hot-headed, conceited ass. I never knew until it was too late how much I loved you. Oh, I don’t mean that I could ever have had a chance with you! You were out of my reach always. I know that! It was because I loved you, though I didn’t know it, that I quarrelled with you. It was because I was half mad with jealousy that I quarrelled with—with him! Oh, I know it now! It’s all my fault. If I’d been a better sort of fellow—if I’d behaved decently to you when—they first came, you’d have had a friend by you to see to things for you. It’s not much I can do—to hold my tongue. You’ll let me do it?”

He had poured out his words vehemently, passionately, not as though his declaration could affect her in any way except in winning from her the boon for which he asked; and she had listened with her face upturned to his, her lips parted, her eyes dilated in a wonderful amaze. Her very breath seemed to be suspended. He stopped, and she did not speak or move.

“You’ll let me do it?” he repeated urgently.

Still she did not speak, and suddenly he stepped back, his eyes on hers, his face quite colourless.

“It isn’t possible!” he said, in an odd, breathless sort of way. “It isn’t possible!”

The colour from his face seemed to sweep into hers in a soft crimson flood. It was her only answer, and with a choked, inarticulate cry, he took two steps to her side.

“Valentine,” he cried, “Valentine, speak to me!”

She stretched out both her hands to him, and he fell on his knees by her side.

"I have tried to think it was justice," she whispered; "but I have known—in my heart I have known—that it was love!"

It was a lovely summer morning two years later. The windows of the library at Templecombe were wide open, and a soft, sweet-scented summer breeze straying into the room, touched and gently stirred the pretty hair of Valentine as she stood by her husband's side.

It was the room in which they had had so many business interviews; the room from which she had once ordered him with such passionate scorn; the room in which they had once parted, each with a breaking heart, each ignorant of the other's pain.

Kenneth was sitting at the writing-table, his face upturned to his wife as she stood with one hand resting on his shoulder and an open letter in the other. Her face was grave, and there was a certain horror in her eyes, but it was evidently a horror of the moment only, for the beauty that had grown upon her in the last two years was the beauty of happiness. Valentine had married Kenneth Gaunt six months after the day on which she sent for him to tell him that the truth was proved.

And Valentine's eighteen months of dual solitude had been eighteen months of the deepest happiness she had known in life.

The only cloud, indeed, that had touched her married life had been the shadow of the past; and time, with every day, rendered that shadow fainter. The stain that had rested on Kenneth's name had been obliterated from the remembrance of the people who had cast it, with one of those sudden reactions to which popular opinion is prone, on his return to Templecombe as master.

The tragic death of Geoffrey Cary, and the comparatively simultaneous disappearance of Mark Dorrisant, gave rise to endless conjecture and discussion, and the conclusion generally arrived at, and spoken of in horrified whispers, was not far from the truth. So Valentine came through

peace to content, through content to happiness. There were left on her scars from that bitter past that no time could take away, but the wounds that had made them hurt her no longer.

Mrs. Carryl, immediately after Valentine's marriage, had, to her own great amazement, married an old Indian Colonel who had met her at the house in Bruton Street. He was six feet high, he possessed a gruff voice, and his temper had perhaps been better in youth.

"He told me to, Valentine," was Mrs. Carryl's feeble answer when she was asked by Valentine why she had accepted him.

But the Colonel, though gruff, was very good at heart, and his weak little wife trembled very happily under his sway.

"Read it, dear," said Valentine in a low voice, and she put the letter she held into Kenneth's hand as she spoke.

Kenneth took it, and his face, too, grew grave and stern as he read. The letter was from Scudamore, and it told in a few brief sentences of Mark Dorrisant's death—a ghastly death in a gambling fray in San Francisco.

"I heard of it," wrote Scudamore, "I wasn't with him; but it was a bad affair, and it was all over the city. I thought it was he—I'd met him a day or two before—and I went to see. It was he, true enough. He must have got through all that poor boy's money, somehow, and he had come pretty low. I wasn't with him." The words were repeated with anxious insistence. "I've tried to keep straight, because of you. I thought I'd like you to know this."

Enclosed was a newspaper cutting containing an account of the affair.

Kenneth read the letter through, and then reread the last sentences more than once. When he gave it back to his wife his words did not refer to Dorrisant.

"Poor fellow!" he said gently.

Valentine had taken the scrap of newspaper from the table and had been reading it. She laid it down now, and her hand shook a little.

"Poor Geoffrey!" she said very softly. "Poor, poor Geoffrey!"

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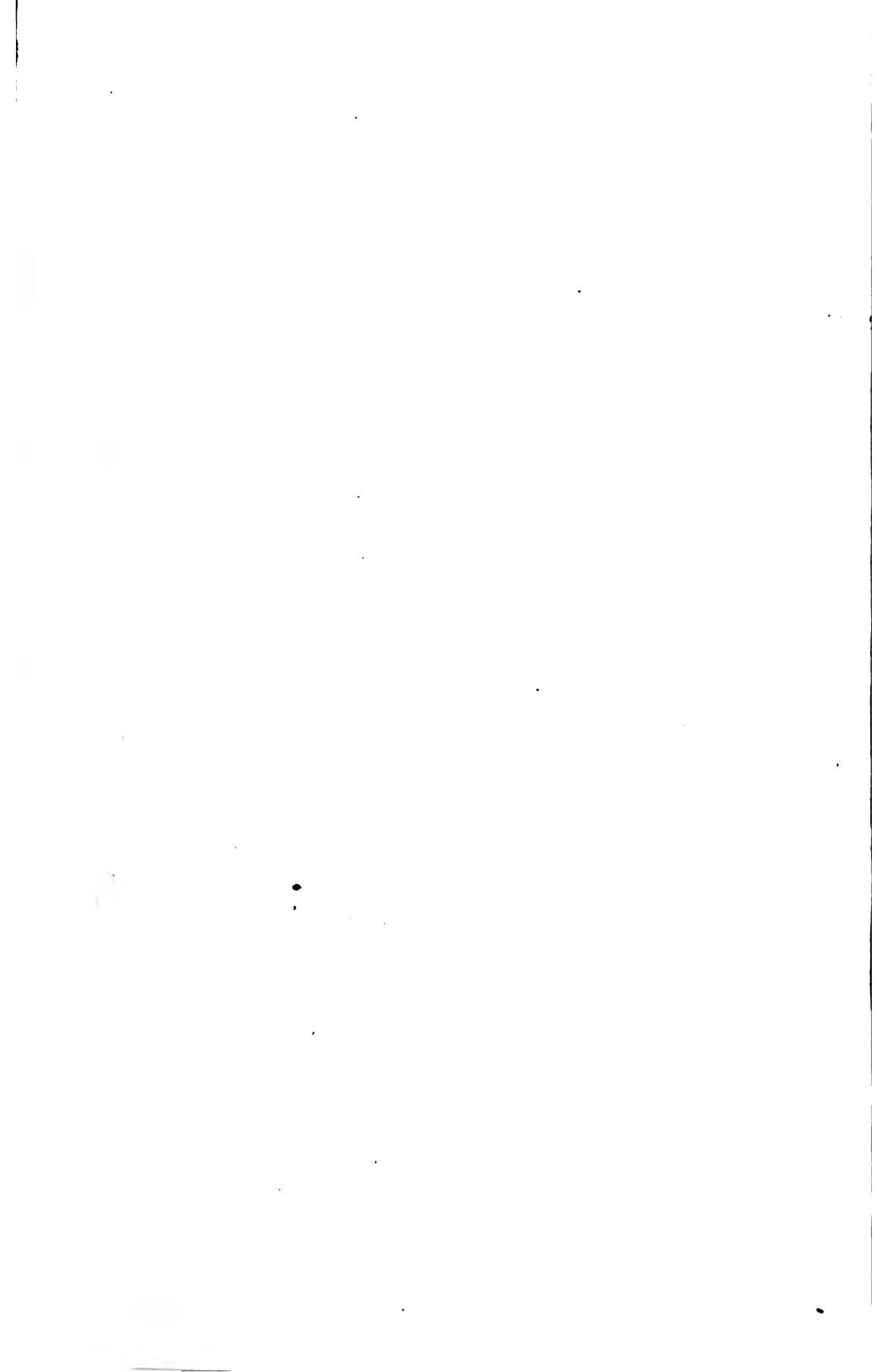
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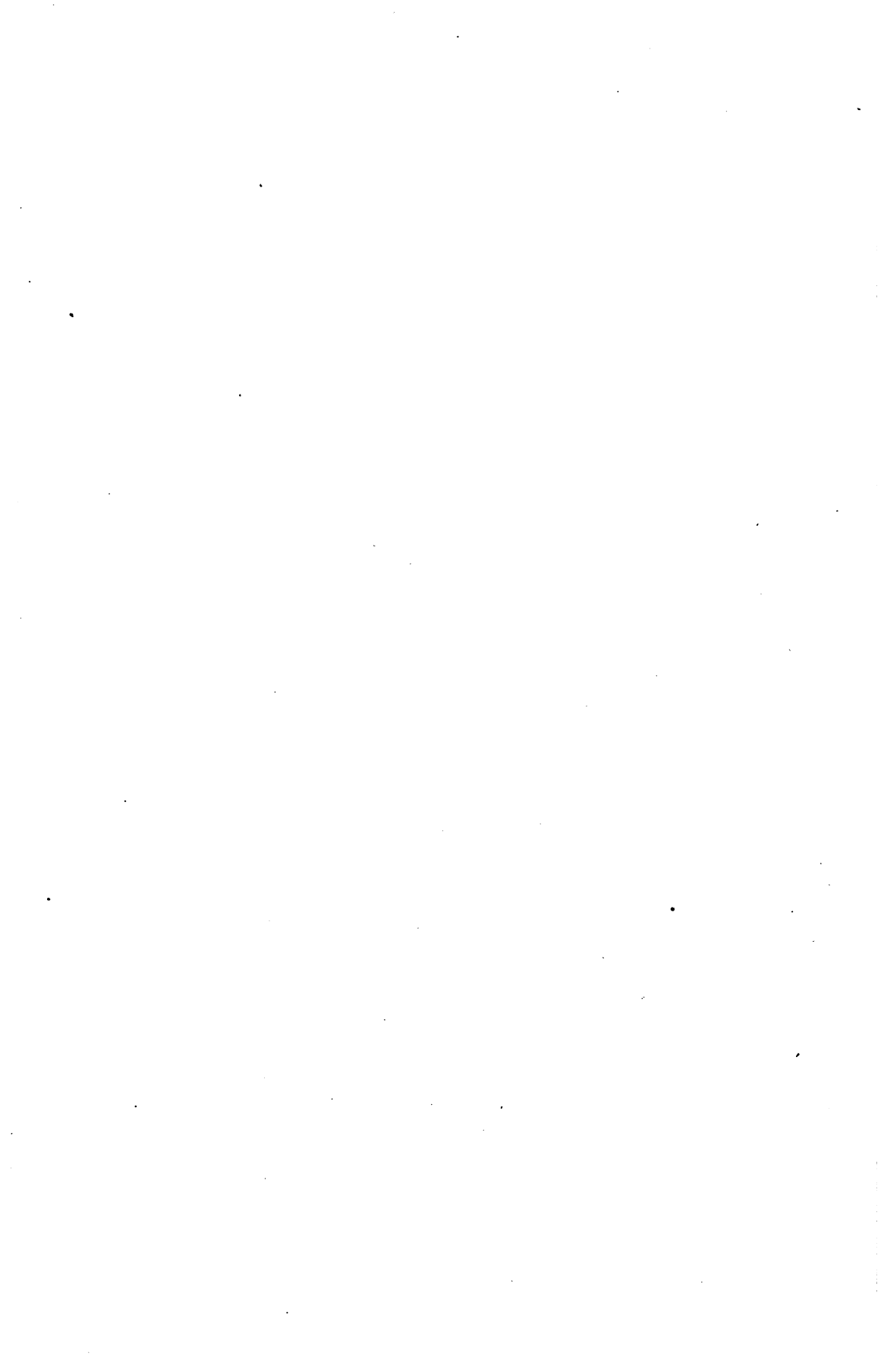
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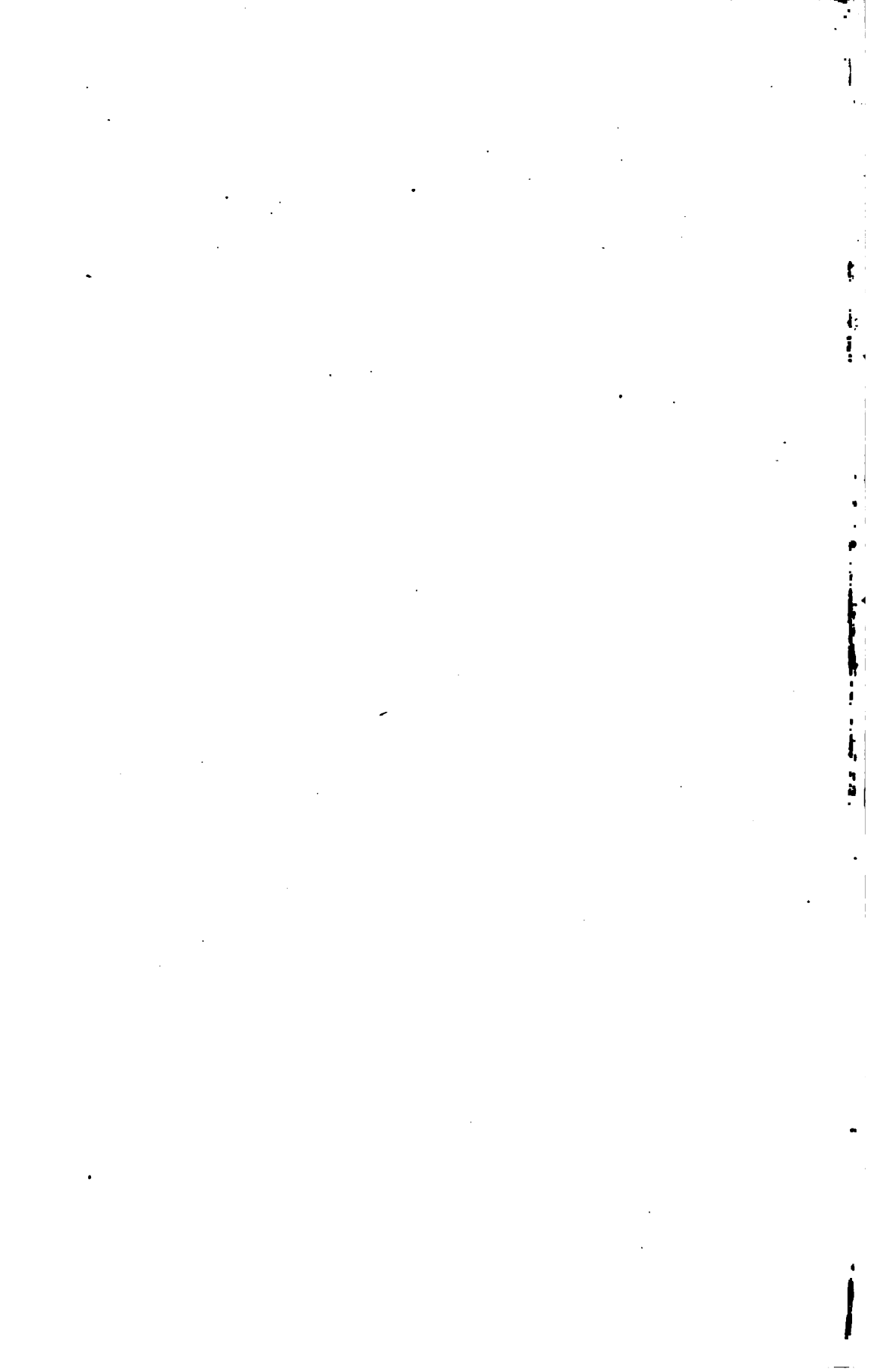
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